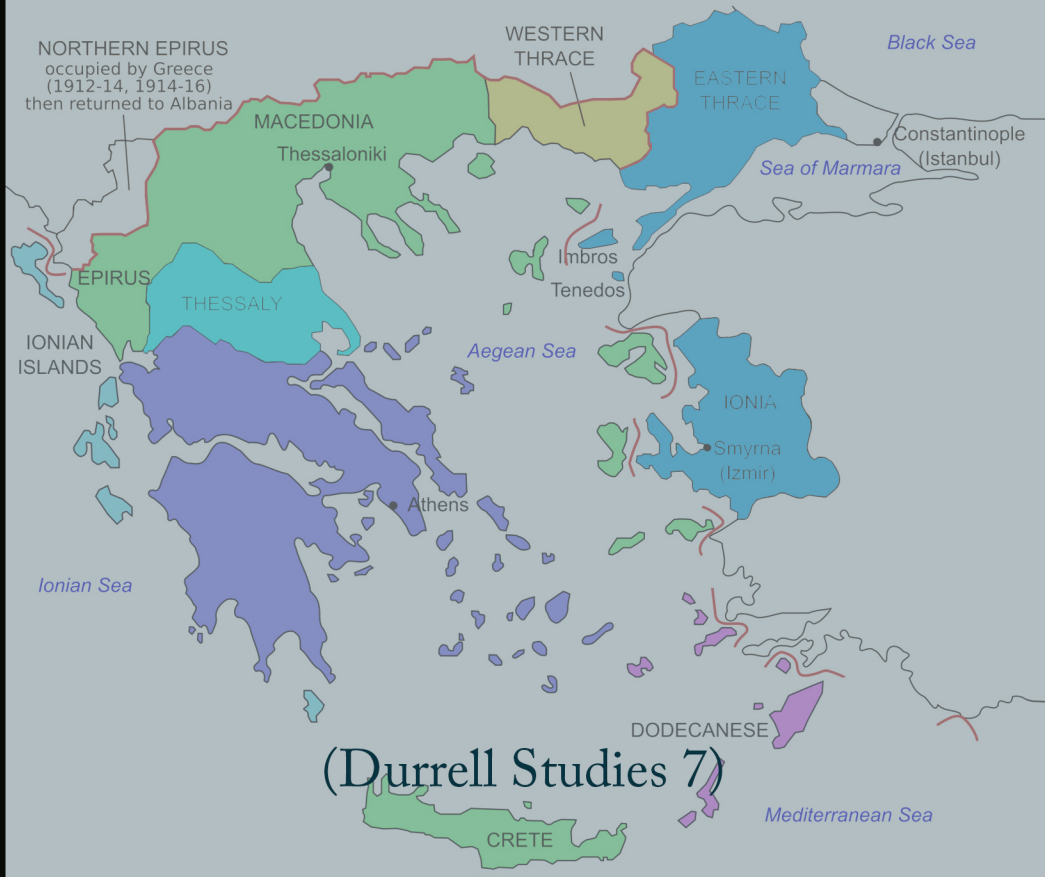
Greece Between East and West

Culture and Geopolitics



(Durrell Studies 7)

Edited by
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Greece Between East and West

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Greece Between East and West:
Culture and Geopolitics

(Durrell Studies 7)

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Richard Pine

With a Foreword by Roderick Beaton

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Greece Between East and West: Culture and Geopolitics
(Durrell Studies 7)

Edited by Richard Pine

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FOREWORD

RODERICK BEATON

Modern Greece, created out of a violent revolution during the 1820s and internationally recognised as sovereign and independent in 1830, has ever since presented a paradox. On the one hand, Greece was established as a modern nation-state according to western European principles and ever since has aligned itself politically (more or less) with those principles. On the other, the modern state was initially carved out of territory that had been ruled by an Islamic theocracy, the Ottoman empire, for hundreds of years – and before that by a *Christian* theocracy based upon the eastern (Greek-speaking) half of what had once been the empire of ancient Rome. Greece during the last two centuries, and the Greeks who have created and maintained their political state, along with a dazzlingly creative culture, bring with them a bewildering amount of baggage: political, cultural, even linguistic (only Chinese and Hebrew, among languages spoken in the world today, can boast as long a tradition of continuous use and evolution as Greek, as attested by written records going back for three and a half millennia).

The challenges that result are part of the daily lives of almost every Greek – counting in the roughly 11 million citizens of the Hellenic Republic, almost another million in the Republic of Cyprus, and perhaps half as many again scattered across the globe in a worldwide "diaspora" spanning every inhabited continent.[1] The same challenges also continue to fascinate outsiders – from the "philhellene" (Greek-loving) volunteers who came from all over Europe and as far away as the USA to support the cause of Greek independence in the 1820s to a good half of the contributors to this volume. The story of Greece, its people, their culture, and their ideas ("philosophy" is of course a Greek word for a Greek invention) is endlessly fascinating – and this is one of the reasons. How *does* a whole people, or an individual creative artist, or an institution such as a parliament or a bank, define its own self, in a way that makes sense both to fellow-Greeks and to

[1] Roderick Beaton, *The Greeks: A Global History* (London: Faber and Faber; New York: Basic Books, 2021), pp. 463–6.

outsiders? The dichotomy that this book explores opens up one of the richest seams for enquiry. And (spoiler alert!) there is no single answer; even if one were to be proposed, it can't be the *right* answer – because there isn't one.

As I expressed it in a book published in 2019:

> The duality between ancient and Byzantine ancestors encourages, or reflects, a far deeper duality of thought and perception. ... Greece *is* part of Western civilization, for the very simple reason that over the last two hundred years Greeks have determined that it should be. But as the double inheritance from its ancestors shows, Greece does not belong *only* to the West. It belongs also to the East. This is part of the same duality and is not reducible to a single proposition. It is not 'either/or', but 'both/and'.[2]

The contributors to the present volume have approached that same conundrum, and that same duality, from a wide variety of backgrounds and have brought to bear on it a correspondingly wide range of discourses. The voices of two novelists and a film director join those of academics from the disciplines of social and political sciences, classical and classical reception studies, literary criticism and biography. We learn how such major figures in the English-language literary canon as W.B. Yeats and Lawrence Durrell constructed imagined worlds of the Greek east as different from one another as the former's Byzantium and the latter's Corfu, Rhodes and Cyprus. (Yeats's compatriot and younger contemporary James Joyce constructed yet another, different again – the story could continue...) Cultures normally seen as quite separate converge in unexpected ways in a chapter on the Greek encounter with early Buddhism in the centuries after Alexander the Great led his army into northern India and another on the modern Indian reception of the Greek classics. Other kinds of cultural meeting are brought to life in accounts of the vanished cosmopolitan worlds of Smyrna before 1922, Constantinople before the 1950s and Alexandria before the early 1960s.

The two great influxes of refugees from the east into Greece (between 1914 and 1925 as the Ottoman empire morphed violently into today's Republic of Turkey, and since 2015) are the subject of moving testimony and thoughtful discussion. There are many similarities between these two historical movements of people into Greece, but also striking differences. In the one case, the incomers were of the same religion and ethnicity, and had been displaced by a war fought by Greece to extend its territory; in the other, mostly Muslim fugitives from wars fought on other continents find themselves on Greek soil in a desperate attempt to find

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[2] Roderick Beaton, *Greece: Biography of a Modern Nation* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 2019), pp. 10, 11.

safety in the European Union. Other kinds of displacement within Greece have been experienced by groups marginalised by the state for different reasons: speakers of "Slavo-Macedonian" (the dialect of Bulgarian that is now the national language of North Macedonia – recognised by Greece in 2019) and mental patients once incarcerated in the notorious psychiatric hospital on the island of Leros.

Other contributors assess contrasting ways in which Greek insiders have assessed their own situation in relation to the ever-present "burden" of the classical past, to the European Enlightenment during the eighteenth century, or to a vision of future co-existence with the Ottoman empire that might still have been possible at the turn of the twentieth. All of these are reminders that the course of history as we are familiar with it today was never set in stone until it happened: there have been any number of potential turning-points in the past when the flow of events might just as easily have turned into a different course altogether. And the situation of Greece today, between east and west, has inevitably been shaped by each of these turns.

The plurality of voices and perspectives is invigorating; at the same time it shows up how multi-dimensional is the issue itself. The question, put at its simplest, might sound like a dry matter of classification: does Greece (do Greeks) belong to the east or to the west? But no one who reads more than a few of the chapters that follow will be under any illusion that it could ever be so simple. It's rather a question of identity. And the ways in which identities are formed, and the competing and sometimes irreconcilable *stuff* of which they're made, are matters of intense interest and concern to all of us – far beyond the boundaries of Greece or the worldwide Greek community. In recent years everybody has been talking about identity, and often ever more stridently. In Ukraine at the time of writing, at the end of 2022, people are fighting and dying to defend an identity which a majority of them have chosen, against an alternative identity imposed by force. To understand the ways in which Greeks, their neighbours, and those on the margins of Greek society have grappled with the same issues is to begin to recognise what a complicated thing is identity, and how complex and multi-layered the process of shaping, and re-shaping, one's own.

In giving full rein to the complexities of Greece's (plural) identities, the contributors to this book by no means give a clean slate to the Greek state, its institutions, or the choices exercised by individuals in public positions. From the daily frustrations of the voluntary expat to the experience of marginalisation and worse by those deemed to be outsiders, several chapters present excoriating critiques and juxtapose tragic human stories to a monolithic and sometimes corrupt officialdom. This book is no whitewash. On the other hand, the old (colonially tinged?) commonplaces

about Greece's dysfunctionality look ever harder to sustain, particularly compared to the USA post-Trump or the UK post-Brexit.

At the end of 2022 Greece once again looks like a stable, reliable partner in the European project (as it did between 1996 and 2004); for understandable reasons of self-interest, but also with admirable consistency, all recent Greek governments have insisted on upholding the principles of the rules-based international order that are now under worldwide threat from authoritarian leaders – the most dangerous of them, as it happens, geographically placed to Europe's *east*. In that context, Greece (official Greece) today is incontrovertibly western. But if all Greeks fear and resent the belligerent rhetoric of President Erdoğan of Turkey, a disturbing number of them apparently hanker for the latest manifestation of Russian imperialism cloaked in the appropriated trappings of their own eastern Orthodox Church. And as the final chapter demonstrates, the increasingly blatant authoritarianism and anti-western rhetoric of China under Xi Jinping are not proving an obstacle to bilateral, and asymmetrical, relations that may be of future concern to Greece's European and western partners.

In that 2019 book I also wrote, "No one should take it for granted that Greece and Greeks in future will always align with the values, traditions and politics that we tend to lump together and call 'Western'."[3] The contributors to this volume have collectively gone a long way to explaining why.

[3] Beaton, *Greece*, 398.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

One of the inspirational moments for the conception of this book was my reading of Christy Lefteri's *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible* (2010): "Cyprus is a great watchtower, and he who stands at the top has the advantage of a god that can see at once Europe, Asia and Africa […] It is an intermediary between three worlds" (p. 253). Coupled with US Ambassador Pyatt's reference to the "Venn" diagram (below, p. 7), this suggested to me not a passivity of the Greek world between others, but its *agency* as both a conduit and a change-maker, a place of reception and inception.

In her PhD thesis on "Cypriot literature of liberation" (of which Chapter 10 in this volume is part), Lefteri writes: "Considering the paradoxes and questions about British administration and Orientalism in Cyprus helped me to understand the position of the island within the vast post-colonial landscape. […] Cyprus' colonial history was a complex one, leading to the meeting and clash of three great nations: Turkey, Greece and Britain, something which had not been seen before in British history. The case of Greek Cyprus was complicated; it claimed its own imperial heritage, the same heritage on which the British also relied. […] In *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible* the empathy lies with the characters who cannot be drawn into the reactions of the colonised, the ones who stood apart." Lefteri's insight into this cross- and inter-cultural maelstrom of continuing history exemplified, for me, the complexity of Greece in both the Balkans and the Levant on which this book is based, both culturally and geopolitically. If we are "the prisoners of history" we may also be the prisoners of the future.

It was important in convening these essays to draw together not only hard evidence but also intimations of Greece's position both geopolitically and intellectually in the vast history of cultural and commercial intercourse between east, west, and Greece. The Irish concept of a "fifth province", which is neither north, south, east nor west, but *here*, suggests a centrality of undeniable immanence which owes all, and at the same time nothing, to those other co-ordinates. This, I believe, can be found in our contributors, from the impassioned account of the "node" of Leros by Neni Panourgiá or Chloe Howe Haralambous' re-telling of "Thermopylae", to the narratives of what we might call the twin cities of Smyrna/Izmir and Alexandria, where the Greek presence is now a compelling absence, or where Yeats's Irish imagination recreates a sense of "Byzantium" – yet

another homeland of Greek faith and passion – which might exist more in a poet's mind than it does on the ground. The co-incidence of imagination and history, of mind and matter, informs the entire conception, and the outcome, of this book.

Gail Holst-Warhaft has written eloquently in *The Road to Rembetika* (1975) of the way *rebetiko* music from Asia Minor has permeated Greek society; and she has also written persuasively and with authority on Mikis Theodorakis, whose homage to his mother's Anatolian legacy she celebrates here (the new edition of her *Mikis Theodorakis: His Music and Politics* appears in the "Durrell Studies" series). And Spyros Orfanos celebrates a central figure of Greek tragedy, Medea, whose origins lie not in Greece but further east.

The politics of modern Greece and its emergent sense of its literature rub shoulders here with much earlier examples of Greece's philosophical commerce with, and penetration of, the east and that fascinating phenomenon of our modern geopolitics, the re-creation of the ancient "Silk Road".

Over many of these chapters hovers the *ároma* – if I can use one sense to evoke a whole continent – of the mind of Anatolia and the Pontic region: its cultures, languages, cuisines, as epitomised in Tassos Boulmetis' film *A Touch of Spice* (2003). As I write, a culinary festival in Thessaloniki is marking the centenary of the "Anatolian Catastrophe" with awards to contemporary entrepreneurs in Greece who continue to reproduce culinary skills from the kitchen of Asia Minor (*Kathimerini* English edition, 6 December 2022). This is no mere genuflection to the east, nor to history, but a fact of life: the living presence of traditions which make that life possible.

The cover image: The map on the front cover is a crude representation of the culmination of the *Megáli Idéa* ("Great Concept") of Greek irredentism. Following the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, between the victorious allies in the First World War and the Ottoman Empire, substantial areas of Ottoman territory were assigned to France, Britain, Italy and Greece. The map shows the expansion of Greek territory following the Balkan Wars of 1912-13: the areas in green, which had been won from the Ottoman Empire in the first of these wars and included gains from Bulgaria in the second, as well as Crete; and the areas which Greece had been led to believe in 1920 would be part of an expanded state (the areas in dark blue). The area in dark blue further north is known in Greek as East(ern) Thrace. The region includes Constantinople/Istanbul (although that city and the land bordering the straits between Europe and Asia on both sides were excluded from the award to

Greece and were to remain neutral, under International control). The area in dark blue on the Anatolian mainland was the main justification for the Greek campaign in Asia Minor, or Greco-Turkish War, of 1919-1922, which ended with the defeat of its army and the destruction of Smyrna/İzmir, followed by the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and the newly created Republic of Turkey in 1923.

Richard Pine
Durrell Library of Corfu
December 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first indebtedness is to Roderick Beaton, an old friend of the Durrell Library, for graciously agreeing to write a Foreword to this book.

This volume reproduces two chapters which appeared previously elsewhere: Reşat Kasaba's chapter on İzmir is reproduced (under licence) from *Modernity & Culture: from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, edited by Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C.A. Bayly (Columbia University Press, 2002).

Kapka Kassabova, another friend of the Durrell Library, whose work we published in *Borders and Borderlands: explorations in identity, exile and translation* (Durrell Studies 1, edited by Richard Pine and Vera Konidari, 2021), was unable to contribute new work to this volume, due to her writing commitments, but generously allowed us to republish the chapter "The Howl" from her 2020 "Balkan Journey of War and Peace", *To the Lake.* Thanks are due to Jessica Bullock of the Wylie Agency for her intermediary skills and to Granta (the original publishers) and to Graywolf Press (in the USA) for a licence to republish.

Christy Lefteri, from whose novel *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible* I quoted in my Preface, was also unable to write for this volume due to her own writing commitments, but generously allowed us to reproduce "The Conception and Composition of *A Watermelon, A Fish and a Bible*", the final section of her PhD thesis "The Flame and the Sword: Cypriot Literature of Liberation considered from Post-Colonial, Psychological and Creative Perspectives" 2011 at Brunel University, where she teaches creative writing.

Tassos Boulmetis, director of *A Touch of Spice*, generously gave time for a revealing discussion of his conception of the film.

Ian MacNiven, biographer of Lawrence Durrell, commented with authority on the "Notes" on Durrell's Greek, Balkan and Levantine interests in the Appendix.

I also wish to record my gratitude to my colleague Vera Konidari, co-editor with me of *Islands of the Mind: psychology, literature, biodiversity* (2020) and *Borders and Borderlands* (2021) and translator of my *The Eye of the Xenos: letters about Greece* (Durrell Studies 3, 2021) for support and advice at the inception of this project.

As in the case of a previous symposium which nevertheless became a book (*Borders and Borderlands*), a proposed gathering of the contributors to this book, at the Solomos Museum in Corfu, was postponed from 2021 to 2022 and eventually cancelled due to the continuing uncertainties about air travel, public health and other anxieties. Nevertheless, thanks are due to the Solomos Museum, Corfu, and its curator, Nafsika-Maria Fronimou, where many events associated with this project have successfully taken place, and the Society of Corfiot Studies (President Perikles Pagratis and Secretary Dimitris Konidaris) for their constant interest and support.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Roderick Beaton is Emeritus Koraes Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature at King's College London, a Fellow of the British Academy, and Chair of the British School at Athens. He has published widely on the literature, culture and history of Greece and the Greek-speaking world since the twelfth century. His most recent books are *Greece: Biography of a Modern Nation* (2019) and *The Greeks: A Global History* (2021).

Tassos Boulmetis studied Physics at the University of Athens and Film Production and Direction at the University of California (UCLA). In 1990 he wrote, directed and co-produced the film "The Dream Factory" which won awards in Greece and the Golden Award of Fantasy Movies in the Houston Film Festival. His second feature film, "A Touch of Spice", is based, mostly, on true facts drawn from his own life. and has won 8 awards of excellence in Greece. The film was Greece's official entry in the Academy Awards of 2005. His recent academic activities include teaching classes on Advanced Film Directing, in private institutions in Greece. His third feature, "Mythopathy" (2016), is a sarcastic comedy, about the Greek political system, and how it ended up in today's crisis. He is a former president of the Hellenic Film Academy and a member of the European Film Academy.

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Gail Holst-Warhaft is the retired director of the Mediterranean Studies Initiative, and adjunct professor in Comparative Literature at Cornell University. She writes on Greek music and literature and is also a poet.

Recent books include Επικίνδυνες φωνές (expanded Greek edition of *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature*), 2022; Ένα ταξίδι στο ρεμπέτικο για μικρούς και μεγάλους (*A Journey into the Rembetika for Young and Old*), 2022; *Nisiotika: Music, Dances and Bitter-sweet Songs of the Aegean*, 2021. She has recently revised and updated her 1980 book on Theodorakis, published in 2023 by Cambridge Scholars as *Mikis Theodorakis: His Music and Politics* in the Durrell Studies Series.

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Reşat Kasaba is a Professor at the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle. He has written on economic history, state-society relations, migration, ethnicity and nationalism, and urban history in the late Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. His publications include volume four of the *Cambridge History of Modern Turkey* and *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Empire, Migrants, and Refugees*.

Kapka Kassabova grew up in Bulgaria, was university-educated in New Zealand, and lives in rural Scotland. She is the author of *Border* (2017), *To The Lake* (2020) and *Elixir* (2023). These journeys into the trans-boundary human geographies of the southern Balkans explore the relationship between humans and places, and the nature-culture connection. *Border* won a British Academy Prize, the Saltire Book of the Year, the Stanford-Dolman Travel Book of the Year and the Nicholas Bouvier Prize. *To the Lake* was named France's Best Foreign Book of Non-Fiction. Her work is translated into twenty languages.

Christy Lefteri was born in London in 1980 to Greek Cypriot parents. She teaches Creative Writing at Brunel University, London. She has also studied

Psychoanalysis and worked in the British National Health Service as a psychotherapist with trauma patients, and as a result has been researching the links between creativity, displacement and trauma. Her novels are: *A Watermelon, A Fish and a Bible* (2009); *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019, inspired by her working in a UNICEF-supported refugee centre in Athens); and *Songbirds* (2021).

Sirshendu Majumdar is Associate Professor of English at Bolpur College (University of Burdwan), India. He has edited *Rabindranath Tagore and James Henry Cousins: A Conversation in Letters, 1915-1940* (2022). He was a Visiting Research Fellow at Trinity College, Dublin, 2018-19. He has published a monograph on the relationship of Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats (*A Comparative Study of Cross-Cultural Poetry, Nationalist Politics, Hyphenated Margins and the Ascendancy of the Mind*, 2013), and writes academic and popular essays in English and Bengali. He has served as reader for Peter Lang and Routledge and as translation consultant for Literature Ireland.

John Athanasios Mazis is professor of History at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota, specialising in Russian and Greek history and has published widely. His *A Man For All Seasons: The Uncompromising Life of Ion Dragoumis* appeared in 2014 and was translated into Greek as *Ιων Δραγούμης: Ο Ασυμβίβαστος,* 2016. He is also the author of *Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis and Greek Irredentism: A Life in the Shadows* (2022).

Stratos Myrogiannis lectures at the Hellenic Open University on Modern Greek Literature, Literary Theory and Creative Writing. His study *The Emergence of a Greek Identity (1700-1821)* appeared in 2012 while he co-edited the collective volume *Economics and Art Theory* (2022).

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Neni Panourgiá is the Academic Adviser at the Justice-in-Education Scholars Program at Columbia University. As primarily a medical anthropologist, her research crosses questions of the materiality of power and the body to look at confinement, torture, and their architectonics. She has published extensively on death and ritual, theory of ethnography, and architecture as a national project. Her latest book *Leros. The Grammar of Confinement* was published in Greek in 2020 and is forthcoming in English and is a continuation of her project on political prisoners as it was delineated in her *Dangerous Citizens. The Greek Left and the Terror of the State* (2009), translated into Greek as *Επικίνδυνοι Πολίτες* (2011).

Richard Pine is Director of the Durrell Library of Corfu, and series editor of "Durrell Studies". He is the author of many books on literature and music, including *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape* (1994/2024), *The Eye of the Xenos: letters about Greece* (2021), *The Disappointed Bridge: Ireland and the Post-Colonial World* (2014) and has co-edited *Islands of the Mind: psychology, literature, biodiversity* (2020) and *Borders and Borderlands: explorations in identity, exile and translation* (2021). His collected essays on cultural politics 1978-2018, *The Quality of Life*, appeared in 2022.

Emilia Salvanou is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Thrace. She has published extensively on issues of refugeehood and migration of the 20th and 21st centuries. She is the author of three books: *How we learn history without being taught about it. Historical culture, public history, historical education* (2021, in Greek), *The shaping of Refugee Memory. The past as history and practice* (2018, in Greek and translated into Turkish), and *Disease and Care in the Asia Minor Catastrophe and for the Refugees* (forthcoming 2023, in Greek).

Richard Stoneman is an Honorary Visiting Professor at the University of Exeter. He is the author of over twenty books including *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (2008), and most recently *The Greek Experience of India* (2019) and *Megasthenes: Indica: a new translation of the fragments with commentary* (2022). He edited the catalogue for the British Library exhibition, "Alexander the Great: the Making of a Myth" (2022-2023).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: GEOPOLITICS AND SPIRIT OF PLACE

RICHARD PINE

Introduction

In this chapter I shall explore the two elements in my title not as binary opposites but as analogues – as "both-and" rather than "either-or". In doing so, it is necessary to distinguish substantive "Hellenism" or "Greek Hellenism" (as George Seferis preferred to call it) from "Greekness" or ελληνικότητα [*ellinikótita*] which tends towards an "abstraction" of "the Greek character", what Seferis called a "national stereotyping". Seferis saw this stereotyping as having been imposed on Greeks – "European Hellenism", in fact; it was not entirely devoid of value (and I, as a philhellenic non-Greek, am very much aware of the difficulty of discussing the question) but should be re-introduced into Greek life *by* Greeks. It could not be undertaken lightly: in his long poem *Mythistorema* we find Seferis' acknowledgement of the weight of history: "Ξύτπνησα μὲ το μαρμάρινο τούτο κεφάλι στα χέρια που μου εξαντλει τους αγκώνες και δεν ξέρω που να τ'ακουμπήσω" [I woke with this marble head in my hands; / it exhausts my elbows and I don't know where to put it down.][1] The weight and style of both freedom and tragedy were considerable.

Both "Hellenism" and "Greekness" represent that indefinable spirit that so many commentators wish to define – "that many-faced expression

[1] G. Seferis, *Collected Poems 1924-1955*, pp. 6-7. This burden of the past would reappear in the cinema of Theo Angelopoulos, who quoted these lines in *Alexander the Great*, his parodic portrait of Alexander as brigand (*klepht*) and hero, and shows it explicitly at the end of the film.

which is the Greek expression" as Seferis put it.[2] My intention is to emphasise that many elements in this sometimes elusive "spirit" which emanate from Greek connections with the "East" are at risk of being diminished, overlooked and possibly eliminated by an excessive interest in, and reliance on, the "West". In doing so, I shall briefly discuss the factors influencing the founding of the state of Greece in 1830-32, the aspirations of territorial expansion in the *Megáli Idéa*, Greece's relations with the Balkans, and the exilic imagination.[3]

If I associate this "Hellenism" with the quality of *filotimía* (the sense of honour and loyalty) it is because I regard this as most at risk from the course of westernisation which I see everywhere in Greece.

Above all, I am looking for a *metaphor* to create a bridge of meaning between the twin ideas of "East" and "West", because *metaphors* are not only the enablers of conceptual life, but the means of making daily life possible – to *translate* or carry across (the word is the same in Latin as in Greek) from one set of givens to the other without loss of meaning or identity. By this means we could regard sense-of-place as enriching, and perhaps enriched by, the science and practice of geopolitics. Ullrich Kockel even adopts the suggestion that the terms represent "obsolete terminology".[4]

The differentiation and, indeed, polarisation of "West" and "East" was never perfect or complete because the intercourse between them was always a two-way exchange not only of goods and money but of philosophy, world-views and culture. As Robert Kaplan insists, "To talk of East and West as exclusivities in Greece is to ignore that the country is an inextricable compound of both".[5]

My title thus juxtaposes two aspects of the preoccupations you will find throughout this book: the place of Greece as a pawn and as a player in the geopolitics of the eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans and the Levant; and the qualities which inhere in the Greek mind when we refer to more local issues – that which is intimately local, ντόπιο [dópios] or native,

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[2] G. Seferis, "Some Notes on Modern Greek Tradition" (Nobel Lecture), 11 December 1963: https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1963/seferis/lecture/ [accessed 10 June 2022].

[3] I am grateful to Roderick Beaton for his advice in relation to Seferis' "Hellenism", and especially to his essay "'A Continent as Big as China': Hellenism in the Life and Work of George Seferis" and to constructive comments on this essay as a whole.

[4] Kockel is quoting (in his *Borderline Cases*, p. 50) F. Mislivetz's 1997 essay on "Redefining European Security".

[5] R. Kaplan, *Adriatic*, p. 275.

and which gives rise to the continuity of tradition. The distinguishing feature of "Hellenism", as far as it has a place in this argument, is *culture*; not alone poetry, or sculpture, or music, or film but, in F.S.L. Lyons' graphic phrase, everything "from the furniture of men's [and women's] kitchens to the furniture of their minds".[6] In the *culture* of Greeks – the shape of their thought, the shape of their lives, the shape of their responses to the landscape or seascape, the shape of their welcomes and phobias, we can detect elements both eastern *and* western. The eastern elements in this culture are no doubt inextricable from the western. They are, however, celebrated separately in, for example, the literature of exile, or some of the music of Mikis Theodorakis or Manos Hadjidakis, or Nikos Skalkottas,[7] or the "border" films of Theo Angelopoulos.[8] It is in the *total* culture that the eastern element has a place and assumes its most profound significance, which cannot be eliminated by Wifi, Facebook, EasyJet or Starbucks.

As Homi Bhabha cogently observes, "It is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the *beyond*." He prefaces this remark with Heidegger's statement: "a boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that *from which something begins its presencing*."[9] Nothing could be more apposite to the themes under discussion in this book: the twin ideas that there is an *other* thought, an *other* concept, an *other* dynamic, beyond the known, the assumed, the received (which I shall discuss below in relation to Philip Sherrard's "Other Mind of Europe"), and the border as a place where something *begins*. Greece is a border of both east and west, and its *presencing* is both its danger and its opportunity, its past and its future, where *otherness* happens. In Bhabha's phrase, "*to touch the future on its hither side*"[10] is the challenge that most of us, acculturated to a western way of thinking and behaving, will find difficult: the experience of that otherness, the preparedness to look *differently* at received wisdom, to think

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[6] F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939*, p. 4.

[7] See Chapter 6 in this volume by Gail Holst-Warhaft, or her *Mikis Theodorakis: His Music and Politics* (2023, Durrell Studies 6) and Nicholas Papandreou, *Mikis + Manos: ιστορία δύο συνθετών / a tale of two composers* (2007; text of an address to the Durrell School of Corfu). For a discussion of Skalkottas, see Katerina Levidou, "A Museum of 'Greekness': Skalkottas' *36 Greek Dances* as a record of his homeland and his time" in P. Tambakaki et al. (eds.), *Music, Language and Identity in Greece.*

[8] See Vera Konidari, "*If I take one more step, I'm elsewhere*: the representation of borders in Theo Angelopoulos' 'Trilogy of Borders'", in R. Pine and V. Konidari (eds.), *Borders and Borderlands.*

[9] H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 1 (emphasis original).

[10] Ibid., p. 7 (emphasis original).

round corners.[11] In the case of the debate explored in this book between Greece's western and eastern options, past and present, this capacity to think in both directions at once is the litmus-test.

The declaration "Ανήκωμεν εις τήν Δύσιν" [generally interpreted as "We belong to the West"] by prime minister Konstantinos Karamanlis, as the prelude to Greece's membership of the then European Economic Community,[12] set Greece on a trajectory which did not necessarily take into account Greece's experience of, and contribution to, eastern ways of thinking, both historically and in the present. He was supported by president Constantine Tsatsos, who argued for Greece's inclusion on cultural and political, as well as economic, grounds, stressing that Greece could strengthen Europe, but also issuing the caveat that the difference between Greece and northwest Europe was a "difference in time" and that Greece, like Portugal, Spain and Italy, would have to catch up quickly or be left behind.[13]

We should bear in mind a character in Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza's novel *The Call of the Earth* who argues "The West [is] a thousand years ahead of this impoverished and wretched country" to which his friend responds: "But the greatness of Greece has always been measured by the greatness of the mind and soul"; one speaker evokes today's geopolitics, while the other insists on spirit of place. It has been

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[11] Joep Leerssen suggests the converse: that a sense of community depends on "being *distinct from others*" and that a community "articulates" its identity "against an Outside": *National Thought in Europe*, p. 17 (emphasis original).

[12] Greece joined the EEC in 1981; Karamanlis' declaration was part of political rhetoric during the preceding six years, following the fall of the military junta in 1974 and the restoration of democracy. The EEC became the European Union (EU) following the Maastricht Treaty of 1993. Greece's accession to the EEC was the fourth new state (including the UK) added to the original founding Six (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Italy and West Germany, as it then was). Since then, the EU, as it now is, has rapidly expanded, with in 2004 the remarkable number of ten accessions, including the Baltic states, Cyprus and four previously communist-controlled states from central and eastern Europe. Greece's accession provided the then EEC with a new and more extensive eastern border – a border which has not only created a new frontline tension between Greece, as an EU member, and Turkey, but has also demonstrated the affective ties that "orient" Greece towards Anatolia. James Pettifer, writing in 1992, pointed to the reluctance in some areas of the EEC to admit Greece, not least because it might involve the EEC in "complicated and sometimes lethal quarrels of eastern Mediterranean countries": *The Greeks*, p. 230.

[13] C. Tstatsos, *Greece and Europe*, passim. Tsatsos was the brother-in-law of George Seferis.

Greece's dilemma since its inception that these two imperatives should be reconciled.[14] Many would argue, in addition, "But we *also* 'belong' to the East". As Arnold Toynbee (who will occupy us later in this chapter) warned in 1922 – a date which Greece cautiously commemorated in 2022 as the centenary of the "Anatolian Disaster" – "If […] being 'radically alien to Western civilisation' is a valid reason for 'the expulsion from Europe of the Ottoman Empire', many other non-Western European states, beginning with Greece herself, will have to pack their bags."[15] That situation has not changed very much in the following century. In 2022 Roderick Beaton observed: "since achieving their independence […] Greeks have faced choices between competing versions of who they really are".[16] These competing versions, or narratives, have at certain periods led to deep divisions within Greek society.

When a colonial society, which has been a subsidiary part of a dominant empire, is reborn as a free, autonomous state, its images begin to change both internally and externally. Internally, it begins to re-assess its view of itself, to call into play the forces and themes which brought it to freedom; externally, it begins to assert its new identity, to talk for the first time in the present tense. Previously, "difference" was what identified it as the weaker of two powers; now, "difference" describes its inherent strengths, its distinguishing mark among the nations of the world. The moments immediately following freedom are the most dangerous. Yet, if Greece is not, in today's geopolitics, completely free and autonomous, those dangerous moments will recur unmercifully. It could be argued that the gap between subjection and freedom has yet to be fully explored, to be successfully bridged. As Bhabha points out, "it is in the emergence of the interstices […] that the intersubjective and the collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are regulated."[17] Hellenism today is most likely to be found in these interstices, the in-between spaces where meaning becomes elusive yet essential.

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[14] E. Averoff-Tossizza, *The Call of the Earth*, p. 93; as one character travels southwards towards Athens, he ponders: "Somewhere this side of Croatia runs the line which separates the Balkans from the West. From here southward everything is uncivilized and dirty" (p. 6). Averoff was leader of New Democracy 1981-84.
[15] A. Toynbee, *The Western Question*, p. 334.
[16] In his obituary of Peter Mackridge, *Guardian*, 11 July 2022.
[17] H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2 (emphasis original).

Geopolitics and Spirit of Place

"Geopolitics" – inevitably a process influenced by the more powerful factors rather than by smaller players – suggests seeing the world (or a particular region, like the EU or the eastern Mediterranean) as a single system and, by implication, the possibility of a single culture; any polarisation of "West" and "East" would suggest that "geopolitics" is antagonistic to the "spirit of place" – a "spirit" which might reveal an "other way of seeing". We must bear in mind that, in cultural terms, geopolitics suggests "West" while "spirit of place" suggests "East". In view of the new Silk Road, this polarisation is no longer tenable.

"Hellenism" (meaning the presence of a Greek culture, in the widest sense) has been central to the history of the Balkans, the Mediterranean generally and the Levant. Whether "Greece" in the modern political form of Hellenism is central to those areas in the *present* is debatable. Certainly, Greece's geopolitical position, regarding the supervening powers of the EU, the USA, NATO, Russia, China and, to a far lesser extent, Turkey, puts it at the centre of Mediterranean and European diplomacy.

But this may be the point where "Greece", as a political state with defined limits and powers, and "Hellenism" as an expression of the Greek spirit, part company. The Greek state cannot claim ownership, in any political sense, of Hellenism as a diasporic or ubiquitous phenomenon. Under the weight of history and with the more recent growth of westernisation, globalisation and the homogenisation that they bring in cultural and economic terms, Greece as a political entity is parting company from Greekness as a cultural and ethical way of life. Therefore, one major factor which must be kept in mind when discussing Greece's relationship with both West and East is that the *political* reality is not necessarily congruent with *social* or *cultural* realities. The two *tópoi* do not always coincide, and it is in the interstice between these *tópoi* that we will seek a metaphor.

"Spirit of place" in fact requires that *two* places must be recognised. The first is the landscape within which most ethnic Greeks of the modern state have developed their mindset: the various landscapes of mainland, islands and the sea. These landscapes have contributed to the emergence of a relationship between people and the places where they live. This awareness of landscape is celebrated in the writings of, for example, Nikos Kazantzakis and Odysseas Elytis. It stresses the immanence of the landscape itself: words such as τόπος [tópos, meaning in modern Greek *country* or *native land* – a word which permeates languages worldwide in its manifold etymologies], τοπικός [topikós, *local*], and χωριό

[chorió, *village*] or χωριάτικος [choriátikos] (which suggests both locality and continuity) are essential to a Greek sense of identity, belonging and obligation.

In 2016, speaking on "Contemporary Security Challenges in Europe, Mediterranean and Greece: the Role of NATO and the EU", the US ambassador to Greece, Geoffrey Pyatt, stated:

> I have often said that, if you draw a Venn diagram of this region, there are three circles which come together: one is the circle which, of course, comes with the security challenges that come out of Syria, Iraq, and the Eastern Mediterranean; another is a circle which reflects the security challenges arising from militarization of the Black Sea, [and] expands to Russia; and the third circle is that which reflects developments in North Africa. Where that Venn diagram comes together is right here with Greece. So, we recognize that you are living in a very complicated neighborhood.[18]

Pyatt was bearing out Arnold Toynbee's pithy observation: "'Europe' and 'Asia' are conventions which are only possible on a small-scale two-colour map."[19] And he was echoing prime minister Ioanis Kolettis in his "*Megáli Idéa*" speech of 1844 (see below), when he asserted: "By her geographical location, Greece is the centre of Europe", adding (significantly for our purposes) "with the East on her right and the West on her left, she has been destined […] to enlighten the West and […] the East".[20]

Given the context in which ambassador Pyatt was speaking, the recent investment by the USA in the development of the north-eastern port of Alexandroupolis (near the border with Turkey), underlines the strategic importance he attributed to Greece.[21] Yet in 2014 the then prime minister, Antonis Samaras, in stating "Greece is the friendliest and most reliable country in Europe for China", could mention the possibility of establishing a Chinese naval base in Crete (where the US already has a base).[22]

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[18] https://gr.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/our-ambassador/speeches_amb_pyatt/ [accessed 17 August 2022].
[19] A. Toynbee, *The Western Question*, p. 333.
[20] Quoted in P. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment and Revolution*, p. 329.
[21] See *New York Times* (International edition), 19 August 2022: "Four groups of companies are competing to buy a controlling stake [in the port] – two include American companies, backed by Washington, and two have ties to Russia […] The complex interplay of interests at Alexandroupolis highlights how the war [in Ukraine] is shifting the strategic focus of Europe to the Black Sea region."
[22] Greek News Agenda, 10 July 2014.

Once more the Mediterranean is becoming *central* to international affairs, regaining the position it once held by virtue of its name. So too is the historic "Silk Road" in its new epiphany as a trading route. We cannot behave as if "geopolitics" is new to either geography or politics: it is not merely that Greece has land borders with countries that did not exist in the 1830s – Albania, North Macedonia (and its predecessor, the Yugoslav Federation), Bulgaria or even the modern Turkish state, or sea-borders with yet-to-be states like Italy and Cyprus, but that historically the connection between Greek lands and lands to the east is intimate in ethnic, cultural and commercial terms.

The second "place" is thus the extended territory – both conceptual and concrete – where Greek activity and experience have been active: from Ai Khanum in Afghanistan to Odessa in Ukraine, from Egyptian Alexandria to French Marseilles. Greeks do not envisage recapturing Marseilles or Sicily. Greeks *do* regard their *eastern* losses as still palpable – a part of their lives that continues to exercise an affective pull.

Greece's "Venntrality"

This "Venntrality" of Greece is both spatial and conceptual, both present and historical. Let us look briefly at "the glory that was Greece". Roderick Beaton observes that it was in the copying (and thus preservation) of Greek classics in that most hybrid of cities, Alexandria, that the *accent* was first placed on words of more than one syllable, which has become a permanent feature of the Greek language and thus an extra-Greek intervention into the heart of Greek communication and, therefore, identity.[23] In the empire of Alexander the Great, Kandahar and Samarkand (respectively in present-day Afghanistan and Uzbekistan) "were flourishing Greek cities",[24] while Ai Khanum, on Afghanistan's northern border, features a 6,000-seat Greek theatre only slightly smaller than that at Epidaurus.[25]

Trade between Greece and Egypt in the Minoan and Mycenean eras involved the importation into the Aegean of gold, ivory, amber and tin,[26] while, as Beaton observes, we might talk of "a geopolitical

[23] R. Beaton, *The Greeks*, p. 54.
[24] Ibid., p. 183.
[25] R. Beaton draws attention to the fact that Seferis noted "visible traces of Hellenism" in cities such as Baalbek, Palmyra and Babylon: "'A Continent as Big as China'".
[26] R. Beaton, *The Greeks*, pp. 14-29.

dimension to the Mycenean world".[27]

Nearer our own time, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Greek merchants and their associates populated cities like Mariupol and Odessa[28] (where the Filikí Etaireía was inaugurated which precipitated the war of independence) and today Odessa has the "Athena Gallery", a Greek shopping mall in Greek Square, with 200 shops over seven storeys.

As Thomas McEvilley reminds us, very strong similarities exist between Gautama and Aristotle, Jaimini and Socrates, Kapila and Pythagoras, Heraclitus and the Upanishads; he refers to "significant intrusions first from India to Greece in the pre-Socratic period, then from Greece back to India in the Hellenistic period", and suggests that Neoplatonism owes much to Indian metaphysics.[29] The traffic was thus two-way: Toynbee referred to "the influence of Ancient Greek originals upon early Islamic literature […] and of Hellenistic upon Islamic ideas and institution".[30]

In view of the modern emphasis on the effects of the Anatolian disaster (when Greek forces attempted to control western Turkey and were repelled, resulting in the expulsion of ethnic Greeks from that region), it's worth recalling that Hesiod was a native of Cyme; Heraclitus, who would become, for Seferis, a "powerful bulwark against the forces of disorder in the world",[31] was a native of Ephesus; Anaxagoras was born in Clazomenae, whose site lay close to Vourla (a village which was the summer home of the Seferis family in the early 1900s) – all on the coast of Anatolia. That three minds which shaped Greek thought were born in what is today western Turkey is a small indicator of the extent of the Greek presence in classical times.

Why, in contemplating Greece's future, should we mention the empire of Alexander the Great, the existence of the "Silk Road", even the comparatively recent (eighteenth-century) settlements by Greeks in Odessa or Mariupol? Because, ineradicably, the experience of looking eastward has been absorbed into the cultural "DNA" of Hellenism. While

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[27] Ibid., p. 27.
[28] Ibid., p. 390.
[29] T. McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, pp. xxx-xxxi and 38-39, citing (among others) William Jones' *Collected Works* (1807), George P. Conger's essay "Did India Influence Early Greek Philosophy?" in *Philosophy East and West* (1952) and M. L. West's *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (1971).
[30] A. Toynbee, *The Western Question*, p. 329. See also Richard Stoneman's chapter (15) in this volume; and Speros Vryonis, "Islamic Sources for the history of the Greek People" in J. Koumoulides (ed.), *Hellenic Perspectives.*
[31] R. Beaton, *George Seferis*, p. 135.

it can be suppressed, it cannot be dismissed or left to the history books. It remains an innate part of the experience of being Greek, of a Greek identity. It is this identity – composite and palimpsestic rather than monolithic – which westernisation may diminish.

It is not as if I am arguing for merely the *historical* aspects of Greece's "orientation". When an Israeli strategist refers to the "Athens – Jerusalem – Nicosia alignment" in the context of possible conflict in the eastern Mediterranean,[32] we realise that Greece's relations with Cyprus and the Levant continue to have very serious ramifications which impact on its Western alliances. The connections have always existed. The traffic may be different but the routes remain valid. The conflicts that result from such interconnections are largely unchanged: contests (*agónes*) for commercial, political or military dominance. For the West, "*Outremer*" was a synonym for eastward exploration and adventure, not least in the cases of the Crusades and Venetian mercantilist expansion (which, some have argued, were on occasion synonymous).[33] In one direction, the expanding Venetian empire. In the other, the Silk Road. The meeting-point was the Levant.

The "Silk Road", which stretched (in the thirteenth century AD) from the Pacific Ocean to Constantinople, is today being re-invented. Where camel trains transported "spices, silks and goldsmiths' work", today pipelines and railroads bring gas and manufactures. As Robert Kaplan observes, "the new and vast maritime empire of China threatens to overwhelm all of these associations [of modern commerce …] The Chinese want to make Trieste part of the same maritime geography as the South China Sea […] China will help shape Europe […] Greece is, in a very concrete geopolitical sense, very much back at the crossroads of East and West".[34]

Greece cannot avoid its position in geopolitics, since the capitalist West, to which it aspires to belong, is engaged in an *agón* with a new world order, in which the Silk Road has become a *chemin de fer*. As Peter Frankopan observes, "the world's centre of gravity [is] shifting – back to where it lay for millennia".[35]

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[32] Efraim Inbar, "What is the agenda for the Eastern Mediterranean?", *Kathimerini*, 11 July 2022; also published in the *Jerusalem Post*.
[33] See Robert Kaplan, *Adriatic*, p. 71; and Peter Ackroyd, *Venice*, pp. 157-64.
[34] R. Kaplan, *Adriatic*, pp. xviii, 124, 279. See Sophia Kalantzakos' chapter (17) in this volume.
[35] P. Frankopan, *Silk Roads*, p. 509.

"Belonging to the West"

Karamanlis and Tsatsos were naturally not the first Greek voices to propose a westernisation of the country. Fifty years previously (1929) George Theotokas, an influential novelist, had argued that "'if the country's cultural life was to remain buoyant, it was […] imperative to disencumber the nation of its exclusive 'Byzantine' traditions and search for a new path", westwards.[36]

If a Greek politician had employed that word (ανήκωμεν) before 1922 he might have provoked civil strife, or even a *coup d'état*, even though the institutions of the new state were emphatically imported from the west. The prevailing aspiration of the *Megáli Idéa* was predominantly eastward-looking and motivated by the ambition to embrace territories and Greek people who were not already included in the original state. But after British and American influence had been established in Greek affairs in the aftermath of the Civil War (1945-49),[37] and shortly after the collapse of the military junta (1967-74), Karamanlis could more confidently announce Greece's need to identify itself with the West – but not without controversy or demur.

Karamanlis, on the threshold of EEC membership, was the politician most powerfully situated to articulate this imperative – especially since he had been born an Ottoman citizen in 1907 in Serres (since Bulgaria was at that time part of the Ottoman empire, and Serres became part of Greece in 1913 after the Balkan Wars). But his chosen word – ανήκωμεν – is open to interpretation. Did that word unequivocally and explicitly claim that Greece was "part of the West"? Did Karamanlis' conception of "the West" relate only to the EEC or was he looking at a greater geopolitical reality? And if so, what was it? What did "the West" represent to the Greek prime minister? And was "ανήκωμεν" an admission that Greece was, somehow, *owned* by this West? Or was it an aspiration, that Greece *intended* to join, perhaps in a spirit of subordination, a process

[36] R.S. Peckham, "Papadiamantis, ecumenism and the theft of Byzantium".

[37] Greece has been on the edge of civil war on many occasions, not least before the emergence of the state itself, during the war of independence. The Anatolian disaster caused a deep split within Greek society, and the civil war (officially lasting from the end of the second world war until 1949 or even 1950, but in effect originating in a split in the resistance forces between republicans and communists and royalists, from approximately 1943) could be said to originate between the leaders of the resistance movement(s) during that war, since these involved competing ambitions between Royalists and republicans which had been active since at least the time of the Anatolian disaster.

of westernisation? In terms of nineteenth-century experience, it could realistically allude to the fact that modern Greece was *created* by the West, and that, as its "creature", Western ownership of the modern state was a *sine qua non*.

The fact of China's ownership of Piraeus port[38] (the busiest in the Mediterranean) demonstrates that today Greece *belongs* (very literally) to the East as much as to the West. Within all these possible meanings and interpretations rests the unspoken question: would this membership, or association, or involvement necessarily involve the relegation of Greece's eastern affiliations and influences, or even its departure from those affiliations? In geopolitical terms, it would be impossible, then as now, for Greece's symbiotic relations with Turkey to be abandoned or denied. Regardless of the diplomatic war of rhetoric between Greece and Turkey, Turkey's insistence on the rescinding of international agreements, or its nebulous relationship with the EU, Greece must recognise the statement by Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: "Turkey has become a factor no one has the luxury of excluding from the redeveloping administrative global structure."[39]

The west-east nexus is irrefrangible. And it works in both directions: Greece's debts to Turkey in cultural elements such as *coffee*, *rebetiko* music, the *Karaghiozi* shadow-theatre, and in so many aspects of cuisine, are undeniable and ineradicable.[40] Yet, as Toynbee remarked a century ago, "Greeks and Turks will not learn to treat each other as equals so long as the Western public […] encourages them to strut like fighting-cocks and stimulates all their feelings of hatred and scorn […] Among the Western public, the names 'Greek' and 'Turk' are chiefly familiar as pegs on which people hang false antitheses."[41] Toynbee saw a "three-cornered relationship between Western civilisation, Turkey, and Greece", with Greece "interpos[ing] between the other two".[42] Greece and Turkey were, in the title of Toynbee's third chapter, "in the Vicious Circle" in which they remain today.

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[38] Through the "China COSCO Shipping Corporation Limited", wholly-owned by the Chinese state.
[39] Reported in *Kathimerini* newspaper, 1 September 2022.
[40] See my discussion of cuisine, *rebetiko* and *Karaghiozi* in my *Greece Through Irish Eyes*, pp. 93-96, 194-202, 251-55.
[41] A. Toynbee, *The Western Question*, p. 327.
[42] Ibid., p. 32.

The Balkans[43]

It is, in my opinion, entirely erroneous of Paschalis Kitromilides to state that, since the sixteenth century, "the diverse societies of Mediterranean Europe […] formed a human and economic unit held together by transnational forms of commerce, demography and culture".[44] Equally, I cannot appreciate his description of an Enlightenment motive to collect "the forgotten nations of the European periphery into the common historical destiny of the Continent".[45] One has to ask "who was forgotten, and by whom?" and "what is or was this common destiny?" The diversity of languages and cultures, religious faiths and attitudes to commerce (both the practice and responses to its practice) suggests that the region represented a "balkanisation" long before that term came into use as a western strategy for dividing these same people.

By contrast to Kitromilides, Robert Kaplan points out that "Europe comprises a mystery of creation born of innumerable and complex political, cultural, and economic interactions among Christians, Jews, and Muslims."[46] Kaplan's very general view is supported by Mark Mazower: "The linguistic, racial and religious diversity of the peoples inhabiting south-eastern Europe dates back to the Slav invasions if not earlier".[47]

The permeability of borders and the fluidity of border-crossings is a cliché of European history which remains true today, despite attempts

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[43] I have never understood the term "peninsula" when applied to the Balkans, or indeed Greece itself. A peninsula is a piece of land which is *almost an island* (like the Crimea or the Peloponnese). The lands which today constitute "the Balkans" – Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, North Macedonia, Greece and the western part of Turkey – even the Istrian part of Italy – cannot be considered "almost an island". To the west, the Adriatic; to the east, the Black Sea; to the south, the Mediterranean. But you cannot make an island of a region which is so intimately connected, to the north, with Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Moldova and Ukraine, with the post-imperial history that these contain.

[44] P. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment and Revolution,* p. 18.

[45] P. Kitromilides, "The Enlightenment East and West" in his *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy,* pp. 51-70.

[46] R. Kaplan, *Adriatic*, pp. 278-79, in his account of the Adriatic Sea and its hinterland; he was travelling from Venice to Corfu *via* Trieste, Lubljana, Zagreb, Tirana and Durrës, among other Balkan centres. He also refers to Albania and Montenegro as "in developmental terms, places where Europe ends and also begins": ibid., p. 248.

[47] M. Mazower, *The Balkans*, p. 46.

to delineate nation-states or national borders and to diminish loyalties and associations.

A map may delineate political boundaries, but it cannot show the borderless state of ideas, and, as Hanya Yanagihara observes, "a map […] leaves no space for blood".[48]

The essence of the Balkans is the diversity and fluidity of its cultures and people; nowhere, in my opinion, more effectively demonstrated than in the account of her travels by Kapka Kassabova: *Border: a Journey to the Edge of Europe* (2017), in which she crosses the borders – cultural, linguistic, familial and spiritual more than political – of her native Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece; and *To the Lake: A Balkan Journey of War and Peace* (2020; of which a chapter, "The Howl", is reproduced here in Chapter 9), in which she commutes, migrates and metamorphoses between *two* lakes, Ohrid and Prespa, between Albania, North Macedonia and Greece. The essence of border-crossing is the encounter with, and negotiation of, the Other. Kassabova's books illustrate in personal detail the way in which these encounters and negotiations can be successfully and fruitfully achieved. In *Border* we find Kassabova discussing "our bitter beloved borderless Balkans" in the context of "the true spirit of the Balkans that hangs on, no matter how renamed and resettled, imagined and invented".[49]

Given the sense of discontinuity and displacement caused by the Balkan Wars (1912-13), the first and second world wars and the wars in former Yugoslavia since the 1990s, the idea of any *fixed* identity or destiny is unrealistic and, indeed, inconceivable. The history and current status of the Balkan peoples with at least four sets of religious loyalties, multiple languages and cultures, must be understood in the context of a map where national boundaries defy *stasis*, fixture, unity and conformity or, in many cases, legal or political frameworks.

If, as so many commentators tell us, there is a fluidity between "East" and "West", the imprecise nature of the one predicts the imprecise nature of the other. When we consider that Thessaloniki (the second city of Greece since its absorption into the state in 1913) was the birthplace of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, it is not difficult to appreciate Mazower's description of the city as "once the brains, heart and commercial dynamo of Turkey in Europe", or as an "ethnic kaleidoscope" of Greeks, Turks, Albanians, Slavs and Sephardic Jews.[50]

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[48] H. Yanagihara, "The Vanishing", *New York Times* international edition, 13 November 2022.
[49] K. Kassabova, *Border*, p. 331.
[50] M. Mazower, *The Balkans*, pp. 188, 93.

Greece – a nation-state?

In 1844 the Greek prime minister, Ioannis Kolettis, is understood to have articulated an aspiration which remains, in some parts of Greece, a national aspiration – the *Megáli Idéa.* At that time, Greece's borders were confined to the original settlement of 1830; they would only begin to expand with the accession of the Ionian Islands in 1864:[51]

> The kingdom of Greece is not Greece; it is only a part, the smallest and poorest, of Greece. The Greek is not only he who inhabits the kingdom, but also he who lives in Janina, or Thessaloniki, or Seres, or Adrianople, or Constantinople, or Trebizond, or Crete, or Samos, or any other country of the Greek history or race.[52]

Kolettis was laying claim, respectively, to areas some of which would indeed become part of Greece: Janina (in Epirus) in 1913; Thessaloniki (then part of the Ottoman Empire and today the principal city of the Greek province of "Macedonia") in 1912; Trebizond (part of the elusive Anatolia);[53] Crete, which became a semi-autonomous part of the Ottoman Empire in 1898 and eventually part of Greece in 1913; Samos, one of the islands ceded to Greece in 1912 – and of course the ever-desired and ever-denied Constantinople.[54] It is intriguing that he did not

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[51] The term *Megáli Idéa* is usually translated "Great [or Big] Idea" but, in view of the pejorative insinuation which can be inflected in "What's the big idea?" I prefer to translate it as "the Great Concept".

[52] Quoted in R. Clogg, *A Concise History of* Greece, p. 47. There is, however, some dispute as to whether Kolettis actually articulated the *Megáli Idéa* in such terms: see Philip Carabott, review of Clogg, in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 5/1, 21005, who attributes the statement to Epameinondas Kyriakidis, at a much later date. I am grateful to Roderick Beaton for drawing this to my attention. The *sense* of the *Megáli Idéa*, if not its actual language, was current throughout Greek politics from the founding of the state until at least 1922.

[53] Trebizond/Trabzon on the (Pontic) Black Sea coast, would have been central to another aspect of the *Megáli Idéa*, to create an autonomous region of Pontic Greeks: see Constantinos Zafeiridis, "'Megáli Idéa' and the aim of inclusion of the Southern Black Sea Hellenic population", MA thesis, 2020.

[54] As Roderick Beaton points out, this underlines "The predominant evaluation of Greek historiography that the settlement of 1830/32 was so much unfinished business": "Introduction" to R. Beaton and D. Ricks (eds.), *The Making of Modern Greece*, p. 2. In 2012 Nikolaos Michaloliakos, leader of Χρυσή Αυγή [Chrisi Avgi, meaning "Golden Dawn"], the Greek neo-fascist party which at that time was the third-largest in Parliament, re-stated Kolettis' ambition: "Next year in Constantinople, in Smyrna, in Trebizond!" (quoted in *Stochos* newspaper, 31

specifically mention Cyprus.

Given the number and disparate nature of the factors contributing to the inception and outcome of the war of independence (1821-30), it was unlikely that a single outcome such as a unified, centralised nation-state would be achieved. In particular, the events of the periods 1821-1862 and 1890-1923, with the aftermath of the collapsed *Megáli Idéa*, have shown that the concept of a single outcome was ill-advised. It can also be argued that present-day political and economic affairs continue to point to the unlikelihood of any *unitary state of mind* among the Greek people, either within the state or in the diaspora.

Irredentism – the reclaiming or embracing of a "missing limb" of the state or the people, or a number of displaced persons – is not unique to Greece: the partition of Ireland in 1922 resulted in the expressed aspiration (in the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland until 1999) for the reunification of the island as one political entity and the inclusion of persons living outside the state; in Finland, the loss to Russia of parts of Karelia (including the city of Vyborg) in 1944 remains a divisive issue in Finnish politics. Nearer to Greece, the status of Kosovo within Serbia and with a predominantly Albanian population, is unresolved (and possibly insoluble). An even greater cause for Greek concern is Turkey's claim, in terms of maritime rights, to a "Blue Homeland" and, in terms of its land territory, to Turkey's call for the repeal of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) which confirmed Greece's status in the eastern Aegean, and some of the Dodecanese islands (such as Kastellorizo) to be returned to Turkish control. Erdoğan's map of the "Blue Homeland" has even been extended by a junior coalition partner, whose map includes, in addition to the Dodecanese, Crete as a Turkish island.[55]

The protracted international debate about the naming (and, crucially, the identity) of "FYROM" as the Republic of North Macedonia was due to Greece's recalcitrant objection, stemming from emotional and historical roots: again, there is an Irish parallel: Macedonia is not unlike the Irish province of Ulster: divided, with (in Macedonia's case) an

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December 2012). A less impassioned commentator has also observed: "When we think of the […] invasion of Asia Minor after the first World War and the Cyprus controversy in our days, it becomes quite evident how little the nature of Greek nationalism has changed since its inception": Peter Sugar, "Nationalism in Eastern Europe" in Hutchinson and Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, p. 175; whether one would accept Sugar's use of the term "nationalism" in this context is debatable. See also Anna Karakatsouli, "Conflicting Claims over the Legacy of 1821: the Case of the Far Right in Greece".

[55] The map was illustrated in *Kathimerini* newspaper, 12 July 2022.

independent republic and a province of Greece bearing the same name; and (in Ireland's case) with one part in the Republic of Ireland and the greater part constituting the province of Northern Ireland, within the United Kingdom. It was, yet again, the "great powers" of today (the United Nations and the USA) which persuaded both sides to accept the Macedonian solution.

While one aspect of independence for Greece was western-directed, for the first century of its existence the state was firmly (and literally) eastern- and (in the case of Macedonia) northern-oriented in its continuing ambitions for expansion.[56] After the collapse of the *Megáli Idéa* with the Anatolian disaster of 1922, the subsequent exchange of populations brought over one million ethnic Greeks (who had for the most part never seen Greece) from Anatolia to new settlements on the islands and mainland, resulting in an increase in the total Greek population of approximately one fifth, with massive economic consequences for employment, social security and the health service. The establishment of new settlements such as Nea Smyrna or Nea Ionia not only changed the profile of Greek society but introduced specifically Anatolian cultures such as *rebetika* into Greece with profound repercussions. In the view of Emilia Salvanou, the inadequate measures for accommodation (in every sense) for the Anatolian refugees inclined many to the Left, politically, resulting in one of the most polarising aspects of modern Greek politics.[57] It also has a bearing on the situation of refugees from the Pontic region, whose contemporary alienation in Athens is depicted in *Από την άκρη της πόλης* [*From the Edge of the City*], a film (1998) by Constantinos Giannaris.

It is misleading to suggest that there was any unity in the momentum for independence, other than the desire for liberty. Even the question of self-government was open to scrutiny and violence, since

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[56] It is instructive that in 1864 the new king, a Dane, should regard his kingdom as "a new model kingdom *to the east*" (*my emphasis*): quoted in R. Beaton, *The Greeks*, p. 419. Toynbee's remark, that "the name 'Evropi' is ordinarily used by the Modern Greeks […] as a term *excluding their own country*" (*The Western Question*, p. 334; *my emphasis*) also seems apposite here.

[57] See Greek News Agenda "Rethinking Greece" interview by Ioulia Livadati with Emilia Salvanou re the "refugee memory", "identity retention" and "cultural memory", 12 July 2022: https://www.greeknewsagenda.gr/interviews/rethinking-greece/7715-rethinking-greece-emilia-salvanou-on-the-making-of-refugee-memory, accessed 12 July 2022. This is discussed in detail in Neni Panourgiá, *Dangerous Citizens: the Greek Left and the Terror of the State.* See also Chloe Howe Haralambous, "(Re)staging *Thermopylae*: Barriers, Borders and the Humanitarian Supply Chain at the European Frontier" and Salvanou's Chapter 5, in this volume.

several parties saw the opportunity for self-determination in different ways, according to their situation. There were, in fact, different and competing narratives and paradigms in the approach to independence, only one of which was the Enlightenment concept of a single, centralised nation-state. I refer to those competing narratives in order to emphasise the diversity and disparity of Greeks and Greece, then and now, on the question of what constitutes "Greekness" and the nature of the Greek state.

Paschalis Kitromilides endorses Jonathan Israel's view of the Enlightenment as "bettering humanity" and "discarding traditions of the past".[58] Apologists for the efficacy and value of Enlightenment thought among Greek people should take note of the reservations expressed by Arnold Toynbee relating to the "westernisation" of south-east Europe, and in particular to the status of the nation-state. The onward thrust of westernisation, as a conservative paradigm of the Enlightenment, failed to take into account the local relevance of such traditions, on the assumption that it necessarily brought improvement in its wake. Even the term "enlightenment" suggests that it shone on areas of darkness, or at least on areas not yet illuminated by this version of wisdom. The presumption that Enlightenment values were self-evidently preferable to whatever traditions they replaced is a presumption that has bedevilled the development of Greek society since well before the time of Karamanlis' declaration (see my remarks on Rhigas Velestinlis, below).[59]

The principal slogan of independence – *eleuthería i thánatos* [freedom or death] – does not necessarily admit of any consequential political structure or loyalty. It is, in fact, more local than "national", especially where there is no geographical concept of where the "nation" might be located. The establishment of a western-type administration would be far from the minds of an ethnic Greek, whether peasant, merchant or landowner, in any of the land they occupied, from Odessa to Nafplion, from Corfu to Smyrna. While they might be familiar with the practices of clientelism and tax evasion (which remain major components

[58] P. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment and Revolution*, p. 11. Kitromilides sees the Enlightenment as having "a strong dimension of social criticism that gave it a radical character". But he also suggests that that social criticism was eliminated from political culture in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – an elimination which, as Neni Panourgiá describes in *Dangerous Citizens* (2009), caused the Left to be excoriated from Greek political life – an aspect of which she discusses in her contribution to this volume (Chapter 3).

[59] See Fred A. Reed, *Salonica Terminus* (p. 177) who refers sarcastically to "the opprobrium which the self-satisfied European world reserves for what it describes as the tribal excesses of ethnic consciousness or national identity".

of contemporary Greek society and government) their loyalty to the personal, the familial and the locale would have been predominant, rather than any conception of where freedom might lead.[60]

The deficit of westernisation

In *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (1922) Arnold Toynbee (who had spent eight months in Greece and Turkey in 1921 and whose book was published six months before the Anatolian disaster) referred to "the masterful influence of our Western form of society upon people of other civilisations".[61] Toynbee, however sympathetic to the situation of both Greece and Turkey (as his study emphasises), made no attempt to disguise his own belonging to the West ("*our* Western form of society") nor to discount the "masterful" nature of its influence. But the first chapter of his study, "The Shadow of the West", makes clear the symbiosis between this western influence and the civilisations upon which it is exercised. He went so far as to state that this influence has been "an anarchic and destructive force" and yet was necessary in view of the inevitability of western involvement in the Near and Middle East ("Near" being defined as Anatolia and Constantinople and "Middle" as Egypt and Mesopotamia).[62] "Greece has, on the whole, received greater injury than advantage from the Western attitude towards her during the first century of her independent existence".[63]

Toynbee's argument rested on the idea that "the Western national state […] has brought with it the maximum political efficiency and economy of effort possible for our world" but that for its efficiency it depended on "solid blocks of 'homophone' population" which was not possible in the Near or Middle East.[64] "Their differentia does not consist in

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[60] Before the war of independence, in 1797, Rhigas Velestinlis (1717-1798) formulated a "Rights of Man" declaration (inspired by the French revolution), in which he used the terms "nation", "the whole nation" and "the Motherland" repeatedly and, it seems, as synonyms (quoted in R. Clogg, *The Movement for Greek Independence* [documents], pp. 150ff.) As a sign of the ideas supporting the *Megáli Idéa* and subsequent approaches to nationhood, the document indicates the imprecise thinking which preceded – and indeed followed – the achievement of independence.

[61] A. Toynbee, *The Western Question*, p. viii.

[62] Ibid., p. 5; and (pp. 21-22): the shadow of the West "has at present a destructive rather than a constructive influence".

[63] Ibid., p. 349.

[64] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

externals like color or physique or birthplace or mother-tongue, but in *states of mind* […] Civilisations are differentiates of consciousness."[65] Greece, Toynbee concluded, "has proved as incapable as Turkey (or for that matter any Western country) of governing well a mixed population."[66]

His dismissal of the viability of the nation-state in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual geographies is not confined to Greece and Turkey: "the principle of nationality offers no more than a partial solution for the problems of South-East Europe", with "Balkanisation" as an unsatisfactory outcome.[67] It was, indeed, a prescient Toynbee who, in 1922, aware of the consequences of the Balkan Wars and the First World War, could suggest that Near-Eastern "ferocity and fanaticism" could "infect" ideas of nationality in Western Europe[68] – such as we have seen in the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation and the ongoing conflicts in Kosovo.

Toynbee believed that "the indifference of Western minds towards non-Western society and the omnipresence of the Western factor in non-Western affairs"[69] is the principal cause of Near-East and Middle-East conflicts, an accusation which remains as valid today as it was a century ago, as we can see in the same indifference of the EU, NATO and other western-oriented bodies to "non-Western affairs".

"Indifference" can easily slide into disinterest and then to contempt. The palpable contempt with which Poul Thomsen, the envoy of the International Monetary Fund to Athens during the financial crisis of 2009-10 was indicative to many that Athens is, and will remain, a subaltern, permanently monitored (as it has been since 1856)[70] by some supervening power, whether financial or political. For as long as Greece, like other nett recipients of EU funding, remains in this client or subaltern status, it cannot be regarded by Brussels as a full member of the EU.

Nevertheless, Toynbee saw the inevitability of the "westernisation" of the ancient Greek language, "converted into a vehicle for Western ideas"[71] which, as we know from Peter Mackridge's fluent and comprehensive account, resulted in 150 years of division between this "purified language"

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[65] Ibid., p. 36; *my emphasis*.
[66] Ibid., p. 320.
[67] Ibid., p. 26.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., p. 322.
[70] Bankruptcy in 1856 led to international surveillance (by Greece's creditors) and in 1897 an International Financial Commission was established to continue this supervision.
[71] Toynbee, pp. 20-21.

(*katharévousa*) and demotic.[72] We need to remind ourselves that, for Seferis and the generation which "belonged" to the "National Schism" between monarchists and republicans, "the movement towards the use of the demotic language […] symbolizes the first step and turning point towards the truth."[73] The conceptual split between *katharévousa* and *demotic* – between what the state believed to be its official means of communication, promulgation and self-definition and what ordinary people actually used to communicate their concerns, passions and fears, perhaps exemplifies the difference between the direction taken by the state and the daily condition of the people.

Exile and the literature of exile

Dimitris Tziovas prefaces the chapter on "Narratives of Exile" in his *The Other Self* with a quotation from Julia Kristeva: "Writing is impossible without some kind of exile".[74] I must acknowledge that my own preoccupation with the exilic imagination – especially that of the writer-in-exile – has influenced my understanding of the Anatolian disaster and other similar events in Greek history, including the purges of Greeks from Constantinople in the 1950s and 1960s which gave rise to Tassos Boulmetis' film *A Touch of Spice* (which we discuss in our conversation, Chapter 8). As in the case of Boulmetis' Greeks from Constantinople who never felt – or were allowed to feel – "at home" in Greece, the earlier refugees from Anatolia, like Seferis' family, were "stigmatized for more than a generation afterwards as 'Levantines'."[75] It is instructive to note that during the recent influx of refugees reaching the islands of Lesbos and Chios, islanders recalled that their own people had arrived, and were received, on those same shores as refugees in 1922. Why do 85-year-old women care for strangers from another culture, another time? Because it was also the fate of their mothers who survived the crossing. They took the initiative to succour the survivors and to mourn their dead. The most heart-rending statement they made is "We don't fear them". History here isn't the past: it's a reminder of the future.[76]

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[72] P. Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976.*
[73] G. Seferis, *On the Greek Style*, p. 95.
[74] J. Kristeva, "A New Type of Intellectual" quoted in D. Tziovas, *The Other Self*, p. 195.
[75] R. Beaton, "Introduction" to Seferis, *Levant Journal*, p. xxiii.
[76] They were acclaimed not only in the national and international press, but by nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize.

As Emilia Salvanou suggests (in Chapter 5), exile should be read in the context of other people's freedom. All people tell their stories, as individuals and as societies; a dominant, outward-going nation will tell stories from a position of strength and confidence, and its public and private narratives will establish images and traditions of orthodoxy, success and rootedness; a colonised, subdued nation, inhibited by its subjection, will tell stories of failure and embarrassment, and will create images of hope and despair which are future-oriented; thus nations tell these stories differently before and after freedom. As with Ireland under British rule, Greece dominated by Turkey developed a mindset of opposition to authority in matters of land, money, justice, but perhaps all, in matters of *culture*, and this becomes part of the "DNA", an innate rejection which continues after independence, a suspicion of *all* political structures which remind one of servitude. This residual sense of needing to feel in opposition is also manifested in narratives which become a literature of confession.

When freedom comes, men and women explore each other in a new light, as citizens and as lovers, but above all they explore freedom itself. Attitudes to land, society and sexuality take on new perspectives and are subject to new descriptions. Narratives alter both subtly and violently. Many emergent countries continue to live in the shadow of their history. But with autonomy comes an unfolding of a range of attendant freedoms and responsibilities which engage the imagination in acts of cultural, sexual and spatial emancipation. The place of writing moves from periphery to centre: writers also come to grief even while they are expressing joy. The force of freedom is sometimes greater than the writer's capacity to embrace it – the surprise and shock of the new.

Seferis, poet and diplomat, was a native of Smyrna. His memories of his birthplace and of his childhood permeate his later relationship with Greece, so much so that the sense of displacement caused him to refer to displacement as a characteristic of the Greek experience. Roderick Beaton tells us: "For all the depth of his European culture, Seferis, too, had once been at home in the Levant, and he never allows himself to forget it."[77] In the long poem "Mythistorema" (1935) he wrote

> Μα τι γυρεύουν οι ψυχές μας ταξιδεύοντας
> πάνω σε καταστρώματα κατελυμένων καραβιών
> What are they after, our souls, travelling
> on the decks of decayed ships
> . . . . . .

[77] R. Beaton, introduction to Seferis, *Levant Journal*, p. xxiii.

> Μουρμουρίζοντας σπασμένες σκέψεις από ξένες γλώσσες
> murmuring broken thoughts from foreign languages?

And again from the same poem:

> Κι' οι γάμοι μας, τα δροσερά στεφάνια και τα δάχτυλα
> Γίνουνται αινίγματα ανεξήγητα για την ψυχή μας
> And our marriages, the cool garlands and fingers / become enigmas inexplicable to our soul.[78]

In his edition of Seferis' *Levant Journal*, Beaton refers to "worlds that no longer exist, but which crucially shaped the one we live in today".[79] He was referring to the Palestine and Cyprus which Seferis encountered in the 1940s and 1950s, but the same observation is valid for Seferis' memories of Smyrna and Vourla (the village where his family spent the summers – in Turkish, "Urla Iskelesi"): these are places in which certain ineradicable memories are embedded and which continue to exercise an affective pull on both our imaginations and our behaviour. Seferis would call Skala "the only place that, even now [1941], I can call home [*patrida*] in the most rooted sense of the word."[80]

Recalling the Anatolian disaster, which made permanent (they had already left, in 1914) the exile of his own family from Asia Minor, Seferis speaks of "the sudden extermination of a fully alive world, with its lights, with its shadows, with its rituals of joy and sorrow, with the tightly woven net of its life […] This destiny in your blood".[81] The word *destiny* tells us more than mere *memory*, since it points forward, demanding a future that must also carry, and continue to live, its past.

That Seferis should become one of Greece's most prominent poets, winning a Nobel prize for literature, in parallel with his career as a diplomat (among other appointments he was ambassador to Britain 1957-62) suggests that the Anatolian experience could be carried powerfully into modern Greece. His 1969 intervention (by means of a BBC broadcast which is generally referred to as a "Statement") is considered a cardinal element in resistance to the military junta, and may owe much to the sense of injustice, disorientation and lack of humanity which pervade the testimony of Anatolian writers. Beaton explains Seferis' intervention as "not a clarion-call to resistance from below, but a withering rebuke

[78] G. Seferis, *Collected Poems 1924-1955*, pp. 20-27.
[79] G. Seferis, *Levant Journal*, p. xxii.
[80] Ibid., p. 159.
[81] G. Seferis, *A Poet's Journal: Days of 1945-1951*, pp. 187-88.

defined as though from a great height."[82]

Exile, as a *raison d'être*, an existence, even *an identity*, may be caused or exacerbated by the displacements and expulsions of war, but it also seems to be a condition of modern life. Lawrence Durrell met Seferis in Egypt during the 1939-45 war, and, as a "displaced person" himself, appreciated Seferis' doubly-displaced situation – from both Anatolia and Greece itself. Their common experience of exile extends, however, to a more general understanding of what Durrell, in his "recitative" "In Europe", calls "the refugee habit". Coupled with "Anatolia" by Elie Papadimitriou (to whom "In Europe" is dedicated), it becomes a paradigm of this literature of exile.[83]

If a sense of displacement is persistently expressed in writings or songs of those whose ancestral home was in Anatolia, then the eastern dimension in their mindset is not only permanently present but must be taken into consideration in the way that Greek literary and musical culture is constructed and evolves.[84] The emotional effect of looking east, to "Anatolia" or "Levant" (both of them literally referring to the rising of the sun), has a psychological dimension which we cannot afford to ignore, since it is intimately related to one's "orientation" and thus one's identity.

Many writers with origins in Anatolia have described the idea (as well of course as the experience) of exile, as a psychological state of mind in common with other Greek people. Ilias Venezis' *Αιολική Γη* (first published in 1943; translated in 1949 as *Aeolia* and in 2020 as *The Land of Aeolia*) and George Theotokas' *Argo* (1933/1951) and *Leonis* (1940/1985) are perhaps the most immediate. Later came Dido Sotiriou's *Ματωμένα Χώματα* (literally "Blooded Earth" [1962], translated as *Farewell Anatolia*, 1991). Other works embracing the theme of exile or displacement include *Το τέλος της μικρής μας πόλης* (1960; *The Death of Our Small Town*, 1995) by Dimitris Hatzis and *Ν' ακούω καλά το όνομά σου* (1993; *May Your Name be Blessed*, 2000) by Sotiris Dimitriou. These explore not so much the nature of exile as permanent mobility, even migrancy, as a way of life – the impermanence, inexactitude and uncertainty in which the only clarity is doubt, the only horizon is sunset.[85] As opposed to the *static* mind,

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[82] See R. Beaton, *George Seferis*, pp. 398-400.

[83] The entire text of Durrell's "In Europe" is reproduced in R. Pine and V. Konidari (eds.), *Borders and Borderlands*, pp. 202-208, as is Papadimitriou's "Three Recitatives from 'Anatolia'", pp. 193-201.

[84] See Gail Holst, *Road to Rembetika*, *passim* and her chapter in the present volume.

[85] See Peter Mackridge's discussion of this subject in "Kosmas Politis and the literature of exile".

the migrant mind, exemplified in Rimbaud's belief that "*la vraie vie est d'ailleurs*" [real life is elsewhere],[86] imagines itself to be in an *other* place; the fugitive mind (to which Lawrence Durrell gave the term *dromomania*)[87] is not capable of this *stasis*.

Exile: It is not merely a literature of sentimental regret or remorse. Take away the specific *instance* of loss and there remains the *concept* of loss, a generic Edenic loss, perhaps, but one which imagines "paradise" as a community which can only be remembered, not recreated. This loss is, I believe, immanent in the Greek mind: it goes back to 1453 and the loss of Constantinople, but in modern terms it relates to Cyprus – that unredeemed part of the Greek world which, more than any other, continues to trouble the Greek conscience, the one major blemish in the unfulfilled *Megáli Idéa* – and it also relates to Macedonia and in all cases due to the greater powers of their neighbours.

The *spirit of place* endures in many of these, of course, but the exilic imagination does not depend on the loss of specific place; the "Aeolian School" portrayed a more pervasive sense of loss and pain, but with a lyricism that raised it from lament and sorrow to an embrace of fate.[88] Dimitris Tziovas calls it "the narrative of testimony" and refers to Stratis Doukas' *A Prisoner of War's Story* (1929/1999) as mapping "the transition from ethnicity to nationalism"; he quotes Doukas looking forward to "the *new* Greek spiritual tangle" (*my emphasis*).

"A nation once again"?[89]

The 1822 constitutional declaration referred to "the Greek nation declar[ing] its political existence and independence". Up to that point, there had been no "existence" because "Greece" had been an idea without a centre, an imagined community, which was now seeking to make itself real. That the

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[86] Rimbaud, "L'Epax Infernel et la Vierge Folle" quoted in E. Starkie, *Arthur Rimbaud*, p. 187.

[87] L. Durrell, *Caesar's Vast Ghost*, p. 22.

[88] On the "Aeolian School" see R. Beaton, *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature*, pp. 133-40 and Dimitris Tziovas' "Introduction" to *A Prisoner of War's Story* by Stratis Doukas.

[89] The expression "a nation once again" was a central factor in the separatist movement in Ireland from the 1840s; the ballad includes the refrain "A Nation once again,/ And lreland, long a province, be / A Nation once again!" The verses specifically evoke, in the phrase "For Greece … who bravely stood / three hundred men", the Spartan resistance to the Persian army at Thermopylae (480BC).

new state and its *Megáli Idéa*, even after 115 years of expansion,[90] failed to incorporate the Greeks of Pontus, southern Albania, Cyprus or Asia Minor remains a point of dissent. As Thomas Gallant asks: "Was there really a Greek *nation* in 1832? […] Ethnically […] the population was very mixed. There were Bulgars, Serbs, Montenegrins and Albanians […] Even among those who possessed a consciousness of being ethnically Greek, there was great diversity."[91] Recalling Toynbee, one must ask how a nation-state can be *created* if it does not originate in a people ethnically homogenous and politically in accord.

Historians are in no doubt that Greece, as a nation-state, was invented – and largely financed – by the Great Powers of Britain, France and Russia, and, indeed, as a "western protectorate".[92] "Double meanings [… and] misunderstandings were built into the very fabric of the modern state; and they have not yet been resolved", wrote British journalist David Holden in 1972.[93]

Can it therefore be said (other than in a literal, legalistic, sense) that Greece, as a political reality, really exists as a sovereign, independent state? Can it really be said to exist at all, other than as *a state of mind* which is slowly, inexorably some might say, moving its mental focus towards a capitalist, or post-capitalist, globalisation which is more "western" in its motivation than any other influence? The difference is one between imagination and reality.

In 1943 a Greek diplomat told a London audience that Greece had four "aspirations": "that her people should live in security within their national borders […] That those lands which are inhabited predominantly by Greeks should be included within her border […] to be able to live as a Mediterranean Power […and] to secure legitimate channels of emigration" due to economic hardship at home.[94] Only one of these "aspirations" – that of emigration – has been satisfied in the past eighty years: Greece is not

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[90] The last major accretion to the Greek state was the Dodecanese Islands (capital Rhodes) in 1947.

[91] T. Gallant, *Edinburgh History of the Greeks 1768-1913*, p. 109.

[92] D. Holden, *Greece Without Columns*, p. 164. We should take note of Misha Glenny's observation, that "The reliance of domestic parties on competing foreign powers has remained a consequential weakness of Greek politics": *The Balkans*, p. 38. In 1833, in his essay "The Great Powers", Leopold von Ranke wrote that in Europe the Great Powers, rather than nations, were the safeguard of independent states.

[93] Ibid., p. 29.

[94] A. Michalopoulos, *Greek Fire*, pp. 176-77. André Michalopoulos was Minister of Information in the Greek government in exile.

secure within her borders, due to provocations from Turkey and from the current refugee crisis; even in 1942, to reiterate, however feebly, the *Megáli Idéa* was foolhardy; and, given the sale of national assets (at the insistence of the IMF) and the huge foreign investment in Greek land, tourism and infrastructure, especially from Russia and China, Greece can hardly be regarded as a "power".

What, then, is left? If Greece's finances are "policed" by external watchdogs, and, ultimately, controlled by global forces; if its borders are set by the "great powers" of the day; in what, then, does "Greece" consist? A holiday destination? A US (or even Chinese) naval base?

One of the reasons for suspicion of the nation-state is its centralisation, the remoteness of many citizens, especially in rural areas, from decision-making which affects their lives. Politics, at national or international level, regards the man-in-the-street or, more likely, the man-in-the-olive-grove, as subaltern rather than citizen. The urban mind loses sight of the man-in-the-olive-grove. Today, Athenians are born with no organic, familial rural hinterland, with no "village" and, perhaps, little knowledge of its values.

Greece's current prime minster, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, descended as he is from the Venizelos power-dynasty, personifies this indifference to the ordinary citizen which we can also detect in the power-bases of the pre-independence landlords and warlords with hegemonic power within the Ottoman empire, and other officials (especially in the Peloponnese, Hydra and Spetses) whose military strategies were vital to the war of independence: as Alexis Papachelas has said of Mitsotakis, "His profile was founded on a model of very centralized, technocratic management. Not on an emotional-communicative bond with the average voter."[95] The disregard for the commerce of everyday politics may betray (in the case of political dynasties such as the Venizelos, Papandreou, or Karamanlis families) an inherited arrogance prevalent in Greek conservatism, which is one legacy of the Enlightenment mind.

What is left? By definition, it's residual; but it is also irreducible, the inalienable core or essence. If we accept that the experiment of nation-building on Enlightenment lines was a historical error, and if we also accept that the *Megáli Idéa*, however noble, was a gross miscalculation of what could, or should, be achieved in a project of reclamation, then we are left with a state as uncreated as Seferis saw it in the 1940s, an *imagined community* which, for many in the *diasporá*, is possibly what Greece *is*. The Greeks, more than any other people except the Israelites, can be

[95] *Kathimerini*, 15 August 2022.

regarded as the prototypical "imagined nation". That Greek people, with the support – some might say at the insistence – of the Great Powers, succeeded in establishing a concrete political entity did not mitigate or alleviate the need to continue imagining a nation that was both *here* and *elsewhere*. Perhaps this is true of the nationalisms (and *faux*-nationalisms based not on ethnicity but on religions) which have become such a disturbing feature of the Balkan region and elsewhere in our own time.

An "other" way of seeing

One of the central problems of modern Greece and the imagination of its artists – a problem which is crucial to our understanding of the east-west dichotomy – is the idea of an "other life" beyond "the broken / statues and the tragic columns" (in Seferis' words)[96] and the concomitant idea that there is an Other to be encountered, assessed and, if possible, understood and accommodated. It is the continuing vitality of this Otherness which validates our readings and our recognitions, and which is, in many instances, not amenable to westernisation.

The problem is insoluble unless it is recognised and accepted that the "Other" is *within* rather than without, part of the self rather than a separate existence and entity. Strangeness, if that is what the Other suggests, is one's own. Modern psychology tells us that the Other is to be found within the Self, not extraneous. There is a point in the organic development of an individual or of a nation when he, she or it finds it inevitable to confront the double or "other" and to cross the distance, to eliminate the difference. The first part of such a growth will be the acknowledgement that such an "other" does in fact exist, that its recurrence is proof of its repression. The second part, in Samuel Beckett's terms, is to recognise that this second "I" is "not extraneous, but self".[97] The third part is the *agón* in which past is reconciled with present, so that the narrative which has reached a halting point can now proceed.

Philip Sherrard (1922-1995) offers an antidote to the westernisation of Greece in his 1990 essay "The Other Mind of Europe", in which he argued that Europe had ignored Greek thought – that it had, in effect, "simply been written off the map of European history [and] western consciousness" and that its vision and "the thought forms it validated" were an other way of seeing and thinking, which, he insisted, remained

[96] G. Seferis, "Mythistorema" in *Collected Poems*, p. 15.
[97] S. Beckett, *Film* in *Collected Shorter Plays*, p. 163.

valid and significant.[98] Sherrard's "other mind" is not simply a threnody for a lost cause, but a re-minder that this otherness remains positive, vibrant and capable of reinvigorating the Western mind, if that mind could be receptive to its otherness and could also admit that it was not "superior" in quality of life.

Europe, Sherrard argued, had experienced the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment, and had thereby developed "a superiority with respect to peoples whose thought and life-patterns were still relatively unaffected by these movements" and whose ideas were therefore to be regarded as "superstitions" which did not "correspond to any reality […] and so were basically mere illusions".[99]

Rhigas Velestinlis (who, prior to the war of independence, saw "the nation" "as yet ill-defined")[100] seems to have shared the European idea, since he foresaw not only liberating Greeks "from the fetters of superstition and the authority of false traditions" but a change in "people's sentiments and emotions".[101] We find a similar sentiment more recently in the argument by Christos Yannaras, that "Greek society is supposed to emerge out of an age-long cultural tradition which is the opposite of western individualism and utilitarianism".[102]

On the other hand, Greece's tradition, Sherrard tells us, was "older and more universal […] The consciousness, the norms of thought, imagination and feeling" were "very different from those reflected in the modern western European paradigm". The key word here is *imagination*, since Sherrard goes on to emphasise that the Greek otherness lies in the "ontological reality [of] the image and the imagination […] which Plato might have called the world of Ideas", and which gives us "metaphors of reality".[103] Sherrard's philhellenism allowed him to detach himself from the western tradition of the mindset enabled by the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment and to *imagine* or intuit a quality of life in Greekness which he could regard as "other" in relation to that western tradition. This was not mere fanciful conjuring of an "other"

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[98] R. Sherrard, "The Other Mind of Europe", p. 41.
[99] Ibid., p. 39.
[100] Quoted in M. Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, p. 73.
[101] P. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment and Revolution*, pp. 201, 204.
[102] Quoted by D. Tziovas, *The Other Self*, p. 19.
[103] R. Sherrard, "The Other Mind of Europe", p. 42. He also says "It is not the images that are metaphors of reality, it is things that we experience through the senses that are metaphors of reality", which may seem like a sophism, but it indicates the intensity with which Sherrard, like Seferis, regarded the need to *see* (in every sense) the truth of vision and thus to arrive at a reliable metaphor.

imaginary world, or of a spiritual dimension (which Sherrard undoubtedly saw in the Greek Orthodox Church), nor was it an attempt to re-connect modern Greece with the time or place of Plato, but an insistence that this "other mind of Europe" today offers an authentic way of life that challenges the rational, scientific, analytical, binary world of the western mind with a different view of "reality": "the imaginative mode of conscious experience […] provides the valid factual evidence for the real world […] The experiencing subject is the whole person, not just one aspect of himself or herself."[104] One wonders what might have transpired had Sherrard conducted a conversation with Wittgenstein.

This sense of otherness helps us, I believe, to understand how Greekness enfolds both self and other, and could therefore offer back to Europe those twin qualities. Greek life cannot be defined or codified as "binary" – it is intensely analogic.

Greece embraces ελευθερία [eleuthería, freedom] and yet is prepared to submit to some form of authority outside individual or local concerns: and here we start to find the conflicts between "traditional" Greece – the χωριάτικος [choriatikos] which relates intimately and fundamentally to the locale – and the ever-changing Greece which encounters the challenge of change both internal and external. Greece is both inner sources of vitality and a response to external stimuli.

"East" both fascinates and repels. The emergence of modern Greece, as a so-called nation-state, has all the characteristics of this fascination and repulsion. Whether it is Greece, the Levant, the Middle East or the Far East (the descriptions seem to be inadequate today) the encounter with the Other has been at the behest of imperialism, commercial greed, fear and curiosity.

That either "side" can see the other as "infidel" – that is, not sharing our Faith – is in fact a perfect equation and metaphor: but it is a metaphor of necessary fear. In Cavafy's "Waiting for the Barbarians" the anticipated barbarians don't arrive.

> Και τώρα τι θα γένουμε χωρίς βαρβάρους
> Οι άνθρωποι αυτοί ήσαν μια κάποια λύσις –

"Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?" the poet asks. "Those people were a kind of solution."[105] Without someone to fear, without a threat to one's civilisation, there is no need for walls. Where

[104] Ibid., p. 44.
[105] Translation by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard in Cavafy's *Collected Poems*, pp. 14-15.

would we be without walls? If we had no-one to hate?

As a character in Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* observes, "two paces east or west and the whole picture is changed".[106] From where I stand, I see A. From where you stand, you see not A but B. If we cannot agree on what we both see, and therefore on what we *believe* about it (since it is the same object/territory/person/idea), we must go to war. You are my "infidel"; I am yours. Following the logic of my overall argument, Love and Hate, fascination and repulsion, are binary opposites, whereas a metaphorical meeting-point between them would be analogic. In the case of Greece and Turkey, for example, the city which Greeks call "Constantinople" and the city which the Turks call "Istanbul" is clearly *not the same city.* A metaphor is needed by which these cities, and by implication Smyrna/Izmir, can become singular in the imagination of both mindsets.

Violence is the child of perception. Aggression as a state of mind is an advanced stage of suspicion and dislike, but is very different from an *act* of aggression. As Toynbee observed: "The most essential guarantee [for peace] is the elimination of fear".[107] But we must also heed Freud's warning: "It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left to receive the manifestation of their aggressiveness".[108]

Tourism

The true "revolution" for ordinary Greek people depended on two factors – the transfer of land ownership from landlord to tenant, and the discovery by the north and west of Greece's sunshine, without which the land remained unprofitable: it was a psychological release from the prison of the land. The peasant farmer "enjoyed" an ambivalent relationship with his land – which, of course, wasn't "his" at all, and which was inhospitable and often infertile. The sudden availability of cash instead of subsistence farming created a "get-rich-quick" mentality that characterised the phenomenal growth of Greek tourism in the twentieth century, making the peasant itchy with greed, creating a tourism industry which is the single most significant contributor to the exchequer and (outside the civil service) the largest employer. Cruise ships are now the "Silk Road" of tourism – globalising tourism and homogenising cities like Athens, Corfu and

[106] L. Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet*, p. 210.
[107] A. Toynbee, *The Western Question*, p. 324.
[108] S. Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, p. 114.

Venice. East and West mean nothing to a cruise ship.

While it is a cliché that northern Europeans predominantly think of Greece, like Spain or Portugal, as a holiday destination, the cliché has its roots in reality. Tourism has created a false sense of "otherness": sun and beaches and monuments that are not readily available in Manchester or Rovaniemi. But there is a Greece "other" to those whose mindsets have been formed in northern and north-western Europe. I observed this very clearly in the mis-match between northern and southern researchers and practitioners in a Council of Europe project on cultural development programmes between 1978-83. Attitudes to, and expectations of, planning, funding and public engagement were quite different between those from Norway, Finland and Germany and those from Spain, Portugal and Greece. The way society is organised was fundamentally different. The emphasis in southern cultures on spontaneity, informality and voluntary work was almost completely lacking in their northern counterparts. The two contrasting approaches were the top-down (*dirigiste*) and the grassroots. We may find a further explanation of this difference (in attitude to the quality of life) in the fact that where the western tradition relies on the narrative of the novel as a way of thinking and proposing thoughts, Greece came relatively late to the novel (*mythistórema*),[109] because its narrative was predominantly "the culture of residual orality".[110] This orality is very similar to the Irish song tradition of *sean nós* (or "old style") which relies on both spontaneity, improvisation and informality, all of which were absent from the northern planning minds I encountered in my cultural research.

The deficits of the European "Union"

I should admit to a severe prejudice against the bureaucratisation and homogenisation – and indeed the illogic – of Europe as the empire of its union attempts to embrace cultures which are alien and incomprehensible to the bourgeois aspect of the original states – Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg [Benelux], France and Germany (from which I except Italy as a southern state). I was an ardent Europhile in cultural terms, seeing Europe as a collection of cultures. I subscribed to the vision of its founder-thinkers like Jean Monnet and Denis de Rougemont, who endeavoured to re-establish Europe as a house of peace rather than discord. But Monnet himself acknowledged "Europe has never existed;

[109] See R. Beaton, *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature*, pp. 52-65.
[110] D. Tziovas, *The Other Self*, p. 23.

one has genuinely to create Europe".[111] The "Europe" that has been created is, I believe, a travesty of what its visionaries wished for.

For me, this bourgeois brain is exemplified by the EU attempt – an attempt which it later acknowledged to have failed – to standardise a wide variety of fruits and vegetables: homogenous apples, strawberries, tomatoes, carrots and twenty-six other fruits and vegetables, were envisaged from 1988 until the project was abandoned in 2009.[112] It is impossible to bind north and south together culturally, by a single understanding of what it means to be European: an aesthetic and conceptual equivalent of the standardised "eurocumber". But as a former president of the EU Commission, Jacques Delors, once commented, "You don't fall in love with a market"[113] – especially if the market vendors stock only standardised produce.

As Stratos Constantinidis remarks: "the expected unity of European culture will occur when there is a reciprocal cultural exchange in which each member nation-state internalizes the culture of the other nation-states […] But who controls the 'gospel' of European cultural unification?" He asks "how to educate the citizens of the various nation-states to see themselves as Eurocitizens (not as nationals) without transforming the united nation-states of Europe into one 'nation'[?]."[114]

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111 Quoted by Elaine Sciolino, "Visions of a Union: Europe Searches for New Identity", *New York Times*, 15 December 2002.

112 The eradication of the "bendy cucumber" and the "knobbly carrot" was the subject of Commission Regulation (EEC) no.1677/88; the other offending deviant fruits and vegetables were: apricots, artichokes, asparagus, aubergines, avocadoes, beans, Brussel [*sic*] Sprouts, cabbage, cauliflowers, celery, cherries, chicory, courgettes, garlic, hazelnuts, leeks, melons, mushrooms, onions, peas, plums, spinach, walnuts and water melons. The prohibited sale of unwarranted examples of these items was rescinded in 2009, although varieties that did not conform to the desired shape or size were still to be labelled as inferior. The relevant EU Commissioner stated that the cancellation of the project "is a concrete example of our drive to cut unnecessary red tape. We don't need to regulate this sort of thing at EU level. It makes no sense to throw perfectly good products away, just because they are the wrong size and shape": European Parliament press release, 30 June 2009.

113 Quoted by Hermann von Rompuy, President of the European Council, 7 May 2013.

114 S. Constantinidis, *Modern Greek Theatre*, pp. 24, 27. As early as 1882, Ernest Renan foresaw a different Europe: "Nations are not something eternal. They had their beginnings and they will end. A European confederation will very probably replace them": quoted in H. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, p. 20. A "united states of Europe" had even been proposed in 1848, while, almost a century later, Winston Churchill urged "We must build a kind of United States of Europe" (he was speaking in the context of the Council of Europe):

The real "crisis" is not economic. The problem is "Europe". I also plead guilty to an irresponsible, but irresistible, play on words: this crisis is exacerbated by a curious linguistic conundrum: the letters "eu" are the prefix for Greek hopefulness and positive thinking: *eu*phoric, *eu*phemism, and *eu*logy speak of good things. None of this chimes with the current Greek experience; in fact, Greeks might greet this *eu*-turn in linguistics with derision. Take the *eu* from Europe and you are left with *rope* – whether it is used to bind together diverse cultures in a semblance of unity, or to hang the conscience of the continent.[115]

East, West, or Both?

In 1993 James Pettifer asked whether Greece had "A European or a Balkan Future?"[116] Since then, many of the states of eastern Europe, including Hungary and Poland, and the Balkan states of Romania and Bulgaria, have decided to "belong" to the West. The answer, therefore, must, politically and economically, be "*both*". But culturally (in the widest understanding of the word) the synthesis of these identities is more elusive. Languages expire with the last native speaker, as we have seen for example in the case of Cornish; customs cease to be preserved, practised or "honoured" (I use the word with caution); tastes and practices in cuisine change according not only to market forces but also to inclination and health concerns. But it is when the *totality* of a culture is superseded by that of another culture that it becomes like a threatened Amazonian tribe: it loses its language, its habitat and ultimately its existence.

How does a "Hellenism", which traditionalists see as more *eastern*-looking in emphasis, contribute to modern Greece which is predominantly *western*-looking in terms of politics and economics and tactical alignment? How does the essentially "Turkish" character of rebetika music or the Karaghiozis shadow-theatre, to say nothing of "Greek coffee", "fit" with a culture becoming increasingly Occident-ed and coca-colonised? How can we discuss a "Greek spirit" when one

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https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/address_given_by_winston_churchill_zurich_19_september_1946, accessed 10 May 2021.

[115] Consider Tony Judt (already writing in 1996, before the major expansion of the EU): "the real or apparent logic of mutual economic advantage not sufficing to account for the complexity of its formal arrangements, there has been invoked a sort of ontological ethic of political community": *A Grand Illusion*, p. 23.

[116] The title of chapter 19 in his *The Greeks*. He declined to contribute an updated version of this chapter to the present volume: "in the circumstances it is too soon to go in for current analysis": email to the editor, 28 August 2022.

British writer characterises Greece as "a permanent oscillation between opposites"? [117]

Seferis insisted on an indigenous "Greek Hellenism" which "will only show its face when the Greece of today has acquired its own real intellectual character and features". For Seferis, the "whole question" of Hellenism was: "how profoundly and how truly can a Greek confront his own self and that nature of his which must inevitably be part of the greater nature which is Hellenic?"[118] For Seferis, "tradition" was only valuable "for its power to break habit" by which "it demonstrates its vitality".[119]

Clearly, therefore, it was not a piety to be unquestionably cherished or maintained immune to change; to the contrary, a tradition (and hence the culture which it represented) was valid only so far as it demonstrated its "vitality" by being open to change. Seferis asked Greeks "to seek the truth not by asking *how* to be Greek but with the conviction that since they *are* Greeks the work that they will truly produce cannot be anything other than Greek",[120] and believed that this indigenous "Greekness" would create that desired intellectual character. It was, for Seferis, not an "archaeological idea" but an "idea of human worth and freedom", including "the sense of justice [which] penetrated the Greek mind to such an extent that it became a law of the physical world".[121] It was neither an abstraction nor a "biological continuity" but an "accumulated culture",[122] in which that physical world – celebrated and mourned in his and Odysseas Elytis' poetry – was a vital fixture. Sherrard quotes Seferis: "I have a very organic feeling that identifies human life with the natural world of Greece".[123]

The same Seferis, however, in 1942 would refer to westernisation (which he also calls "bastardisation"), asking rhetorically, "What happens to a Bedouin tribal chief when you feed him for several months on Coca-Cola and give him a few cubic metres of concrete to live in?"[124] – an

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[117] D. Holden, *Greece Without Columns*, p. 21.
[118] G. Seferis, *On the Greek Style*, pp. 94-96.
[119] Quoted in R. Beaton, *George Seferis*, p. 382.
[120] Quoted in R. Beaton, *The Greeks*, pp. 431-32.
[121] G. Seferis, Nobel Banquet Speech, Stockholm, 10 December 1963: https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1963/seferis/speech [accessed 10 June 2022].
[122] G. Seferis, *On the Greek Style*, pp. 165, 167-69.
[123] In *The Wound of Greece*, p. 110.
[124] G. Seferis, *Levant Journal*, pp. 138, 141. To which we might add a more recent note from Cyprus: "Haji-Markos [note the hybrid Turkish-Greek name] could not fathom why grown men these days were so willing, for the sake of fashion, for the

indication that while one must not be uncritical, one's judgement should discriminate between change that was beneficial and change that was hurtful to the subject. Similarly, where the Orthodox Church has been regarded as a central pillar of the Greek character (one which may have deterred the introduction of Enlightenment ideas) we are given a warning, in Andreas Koumi's novel *The Cypriot*, that "a religion that fails to accommodate a rapidly changing world is […] surely doomed".[125]

Kazantzakis saw Hellenism as "a double-born soul", as a desired fusion of eastern and western mindscapes. He was an admirer of Ion Dragoumis, who saw Hellenism as "a warm and mighty river" and which Kazantzakis believed "in some mysterious way […] helps you to see and comprehend Greece".[126] Allowing for the emotive use of the word "mysterious", Kazantzakis saw Dragoumis, as we have seen Seferis, viewing Hellenism as a moving, and therefore vibrant and changing, expression of Greece.

Kazantzakis insists on the dual heritage of Greece-plus-the-Orient. He asks whether "the merchants, the peasants, the householders, and their wives, their manners, their actions and reactions […] have anywhere succeeded in reaching a synthesis" of this dual legacy.[127] (He might have been anticipating F.S.L. Lyons in his delineation of Greek kitchens and minds.) Moreover, "We seek", he admitted, "*for our new soul* in demotic poetry, in dances, embroidery and music, in the architecture of the Greek house, in our habits, celebrations, sayings, superstitions and language"; the two currents never join. But the typical Greek, "clever and shallow, with no metaphysical anxieties", suddenly "breaks the crust of Greek logic" and "the East, all darkness and mystery, rises up from deep within him".[128]

Kazantzakis willingly acknowledges that "Western civilization […] is an amazing attainment of modern man" and that "whether we like it or not we are caught in its wheels, we've identified its destiny with our own", but "it has no relation […] to the metaphysical migration of the East […] We are trapped between East and West […] Within us exist profound

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sake of being more 'European', to suffocate their loins in these newfangled men's tights they called trousers": A. Koumi, *The Cypriot*, p. 19.

[125] A. Koumi, *The Cypriot*, p. 61.

[126] N. Kazantzakis, *Travels in Greece*, p. 9. See John Mazis' chapter on Dragoumis in this volume.

[127] Ibid., p. 67.

[128] Ibid., pp. 167-68; *my emphasis*.

passions opposed to the rhythms of the West […] To give form to the formless, to make reason of the Oriental cry; this is our duty."[129]

An example from India may help: in 1953 André Malraux spoke with Jawaharlal Nehru, prime minister of India; he reported Nehru as saying "We live two different lives: one, which people call the practical life which is concerned with practical matters; the other, which we reserve for our moments of inner solitude".[130] This inner self is also what Sherrard found in Greece in "the other mind of Europe". Most telling was Nehru's admission: "We are heading towards a kind of marriage with the West […] How we are going to harmonize a civilization of the machine with what was a civilization of the soul? What is it", he asked, "that drives Europe to this mechanical frenzy? In the endless Time which is still the time in this country, why should anyone be in such a hurry to survive?"[131] Nehru speaks of an Indian soul that "*was*"; Kazantzakis, of the need to "seek our *new* soul".

Later writers have explored "Hellenism" both critically and uncritically; among the former, Kazantzakis and Theotokas are prominent, while in our own times Natalie Bakopoulos' *The Green Shore* (2012) and Vassilis Alexakis' *Foreign Words* (2002/2006) and *Mother Tongue* (2006/2017) question – and reinstate – essentially Greek values which Seferis would describe as "humanising".

That the superstitions and "false traditions" referred to by Rhigas and later advocates of modernisation were emphatically *not* disproved by Enlightenment thinking is demonstrated, for example, by the stories of the Skiathot Alexandros Papadiamandis (1851-1911) where they are powerfully present in the words and behaviour of his fellow-islanders. Even in his 1903 novella *I Fónissa* [The Murderess] which could be read as an early

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[129] Ibid., pp. 170-71.

[130] A. Malraux, "Temptation of the West" in *Antimemoirs*, p. 265. Malraux, with other thinkers like Denis de Rougemont, did much to create the "conscience" of Europe, acculturating it to rhythms and cadences of thought which were in danger of being forgotten.

[131] Ibid., p. 272. Despite his xenophobia and impatience with inefficiencies the Zionist Rabbi Marcus [Mordecai] Ehrenpreis (1889-1951), a native of Lviv in Ukraine, acknowledged that "the East, where least Europeanized, has preserved more that is intrinsically human than the West […] We Westerners […] take hold of life the wrong way, we grasp it from without instead of seizing it from within […] In this backward Orient one feels closer to the truth and farther from illusion […] The artificiality and unnaturalness of our western civilization becomes unusually apparent […] As against western civilization, Asia is a spiritual entity." And he quotes the Empress Elizabeth of Austria: "the throttling of culture denotes civilization": M Ehrenpreis, *The Soul of the East* (1928), pp. 165-69.

treatise on feminism, the superstitious and traditional pieties are observed.[132] (One thinks, perhaps, of Kathleen Raine's *Defending Ancient Springs* [1967].) Papadiamandis' crude but accurate remark, that "the smaller the village, the bigger the evil",[133] is, in my opinion, a refutation of Enlightenment thinking and a strong indication of an attitude to local political life (I am using the word deliberately to relate to the *pólis*) that is prevalent in Greece today. So too is Elytis, who, in his major work *Axion Esti*, said "You will come to learn a great deal if you study the insignificant in depth". To intuit or infer an abstract value – good or evil, credit or deficit – from the local is a capacity which westernisation, with its insistence on the general at the expense of the particular, seems to ignore. Lambros Kamperidis says that Papadiamandis' world "no longer exists".[134] But Kamperidis also acknowledges that elements in Papadiamandis' fiction "still reflect the inner life of a 'modern' Greece in search of its soul."[135] The village may have been transformed by westernisation, but *the evil has not*, neither has the humanity of *I Fónissa* or many of Papadiamandis' other stories, such as "Civilization in the Village", "The American" or "Around the Lagoon" which acknowledge outside influences but which sustain values within family and community which can only be expunged if the culture itself is totally eradicated. In many respects, Papadiamandis' Skiathos is ageless, despite the "progress" of civilisation, and as such continues to exist, and to exert affective power over those who come into contact with it.[136]

In essence, discussion of the Balkan and Levantine cultures suggests what Mark Mazower calls "the persistence of habits of mind which predate the triumph of ethnic politics"[137] – and, we might add, the nation-state which derives its authenticity from ethnic politics. The reliance on the family and its *filotimía* is, in the eyes of some, "a wholly

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[132] See Dimitris Tziovas' "Selfhood, Natural Law, and Social Resistance in *The Murderess"* in his *The Other Self*, pp. 83-101.
[133] In his short story "Fey Folk", in *The Boundless Garden* vol. 1, p. 241.
[134] L. Kamperidis, "Introduction" to A. Papadiamandis, *The Boundless Garden*, p. xiv.
[135] Ibid., p. xx.
[136] As Tziovas argues (in his chapter on *The Murderess*), "In a number of Papadiamantis's stories the opposition between nature and culture, rural and urban life is highlighted by showing the self-sufficiency and happiness of rural life and the corruption and greed or urban dwellers", ibid. p. 98. We might also consider a novel almost contemporaneous with Papadiamandis, Julia Dragoumis' *A Man of Athens* (1916) which explores the tug-of-love between city and island.
[137] M. Mazower, *The Balkans*, p. 46.

eastern interpretation of the social code".[138] These views, so readily acceptable to the Greek or the philhellenic reader, would be unintelligible to the EU mind which attempted to standardise the cucumber.

We continue to read Papadiamandis not as an act of piety, or as an obeisance, or even as an act of memory, but because he continues to speak "truths" which we recognise as present in our own lives, and which those of us who are not Greek recognise as being especially "Greek" or "Hellenic" in their application to modern-day Greece. Modern prejudice against Papadiamandis (as an "old-fashioned" or "outdated" writer) may be due to the influence of modernisation. It may be that our modern understanding of the word *pagan* (and any association we might make between *paganus* and *barbarian*) stems from its origin as *paganus*, meaning nothing more than "originating in a village". In this case, if we continue to find value in Papadiamandis, it's a case of "the village writes back".

Conclusion

Since the inception of the state, external forces have sought to either persuade or influence the state of Greece to make a *transitus* from rural to urban, from primitive to sophisticated, from one act of faith to another, from one way of life, with its traditions, customs and values, to another way of life, alien to many of those traditions and customs and possibly indifferent to them. There are – and have been for at least 200 years – vigorous market and political forces urging Greece to re-invent itself utterly, to lose its "East".

Greece's *transitus* is far from complete, because, as Hannah Arendt observed, "conscience is the anticipation of the fellow who awaits you if and when you come home."[139] Or, as T. S. Eliot wrote in *The Family Reunion*, "The man who returns will have to meet the boy who left."[140]

There are many Greeks who say that in culture, politics and economics the attempt to be western and European has been unsuccessful, especially because it has required a transfer of submission from Turkey on the east to Brussels on the west. Have the past 200 years been wasted? Has Greece failed to make that vital marriage between competing traditions?

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[138] G. Skleros, quoted in J.E. Tsouderos, *Greek Agricultural Cooperatives* (1961) and in D. Holden, op. cit., p. 93.
[139] H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1, p. 191.
[140] T.S. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 288.

And, if it has failed, has it also failed to create a viable state which can be both European and essentially Greek? As Vangelis Hatziyannidis says in his novel *Four Walls* (2000), "Some people are proud of their past; others embarrassed by it; some people are indifferent to it, while for others, the past is so important that they spend more time planning it than they do planning the future".[141]

The central problem in resolving the misunderstandings, tensions and suspicions which emanate from an encounter between West and its Other (the East) is to establish a *metaphor*, an equivalence, a conceptual bridge between apparently irreconcilable viewpoints, taking *metaphor* and *translation* as, literally, a carrying across of, in this case, both *meaning* and *understanding*. It is the absence of metaphor throughout the Balkans and Levant which bedevils the harmony and mutual understanding sought by multinational or transnational collectives like the EU or NATO, and which defies even the use of "community".

In this introductory chapter I have argued for a metaphor between the qualitatively and quantitatively different East and West, so that we shall understand "East" *as* "West" and "West" *as* "East", in the symbiotic relationship which has been denied them in history, politics and commerce.

If one sits in Syntagma Square in Nafplion one is immediately aware of its history as a town in the Balkan melting-pot: in front of the National Bank of Greece stands a sculpture of the Venetian lion, with its paw on an open book, indicating that Venice was at peace (when at war, the book was closed). Behind the bank is the first parliament building of Greece, in a converted mosque. Towering above the square is the fortress, built by Venetians, then successively commanded by Venetians, Turks and Greeks. To the right is the Archaeological Museum, formerly a Venetian warehouse, its size demonstrating the enormous commercial value Venice placed on its southern satellites. On the left, another former mosque, today the town theatre.

Venetian/Ottoman/Venetian/Ottoman, the southern Peloponnese wasn't merely a ball in a tennis match between the two superpowers of the day, but the net and the entire court. This could, in fact, be the central square in any Balkan town. Perhaps Nafplion – especially since it was the home of the first Greek parliaments – is the nearest we can approach to the idea of a metaphor.

The east-west challenge is obliging us to re-examine – and, indeed, to re-formulate – our understanding of core-periphery relations, on which most nation-states depend for their relationship with citizens, and

[141] V. Hatziyannidis, *Four Walls*, p. 36.

on which they also depend for their relationship with Brussels and Washington. Moral law, and our sense of equality and justice, are all affected by changing demography, not only of *where* people live but *how* they live: what work they undertake, where they shop, how they prepare their meals, what they discuss at the dinner-table, how they pursue their leisure interests. To ignore these changing traits in a people's culture is to ignore how people think and behave. Furthermore, the *diasporá* – itself a quintessentially Greek phenomenon – is becoming so much part of any equation between a state and its people that this, too, becomes an undeniable factor in the culture.

In Hegel's terms, this is the definition of the *agón* or, in German, the *Kampf*: *"Ich bin der Kampf. Ich bin nicht Einer der im Kampf Begriffenen, sondern ich bin beide Kämpfende und der Kampf selbst.*"[142] [I am the struggle. I am neither one combatant nor the other. I am both combatants and the struggle itself].

We are left with Arendt's "conscience" and Eliot's man returning to meet his previous self. Perhaps Seamus Heaney offers us a signpost in his version of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*:

> History says, *Don't hope*
> *On this side of the grave.*
> But then, once in a lifetime
> The longed-for tidal wave
> Of justice can rise up,
> And hope and history rhyme.[143]

The marriage of heaven and hell was never so difficult to negotiate as that between the global and the local. One denies the ντόπιο and the χωριάτικο because they obstruct "progress", the other insists on them because that is what it *is*. Neither can accept the validity of the other. The shotgun wedding arranged by the Great Powers for the Greeks in 1830 and at various cardinal points since then (1864, 1897, 1918, 1944) have been only partially successful, because both parties to the marriage wanted more than what was on the table.

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[142] G. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, quoted in G. Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 21.
[143] S. Heaney, *The Cure at Troy*, p. 77.

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POLITICAL LIFE PAST AND PRESENT

CHAPTER TWO

A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS: ION DRAGOUMIS, GREECE, AND THE WEST

JOHN A. MAZIS

The end of the Cold War prompted scholars to attempt to explain the new era. Francis Fukuyama advanced the theory that developments represented the final victory of western ideas and thus history had come to an end; a thesis he later modified but which nevertheless became the topic of hot debate.[1] Reality has also taken its toll; western notions of democracy have come under attack all over the world and at times they seem to be retreating even in Europe and the USA. Samuel Huntington opined that the world was divided into cultural spheres, groups of countries which share many common cultural characteristics and which, now that the Cold War removed a major ideological cleavage, will start competing for supremacy.[2] Huntington's thesis, just like Fukuyama's has come under scrutiny and attack especially at a time when globalisation appeared to bring about a homogenisation of economies but also cultures. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia restarted the debate of "Clash of Civilizations". Ukraine, we are told, is a western country while Russia is "eastern" and "Orthodox"; thus, the West should come to Ukraine's rescue. Russia on the other hand claims that Ukraine is located culturally "in between" with parts of it closer to Russia than the West. Both claims re-enforce Huntington's thesis that Russia is not western, and that Ukraine is a border country belonging to both, and none, spheres.[3] The question of belonging, East vs West, is once again topical.

Sometimes the question of belonging is easy to answer; the US belongs clearly to the West. At other times, when a country is located at the border between cultures, the question is more difficult to answer;

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[1] F. Fukuyama, *The End of History.*
[2] S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations.*
[3] Ibid., pp. 45-46 and 64, 127.

Ukraine comes to mind. In the case of Greece, the issue is even more complicated. The country is clearly located at the border between East and West; thus, one can debate if it belongs in one or another sphere. At the same time how can the West claim cultural descent from Ancient Greece and not accept the modern one as part of its cultural sphere? Twice in the recent past Greek leaders affirmed Greece's western orientation. In the late 1970s centre-right premier Constantinos Karamanlis stated with certainty in the Greek Parliament that "Greece belongs to the West politically, militarily, economically, culturally".[4] This was a claim contested by the left mainly for political, not cultural, reasons; the left also complained that by including "belongs" Karamanlis expressed subservient status. More recently another centre-right Greek Premier, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, explaining why Greece should side with the West against Russia, repeated the claim in Parliament by stating, without the offensive "belongs", that "We are the West".[5] This time the objections from the left were rather anemic. It is official then; Greece, the "cradle of Western civilisation" a member of the EU and NATO, is a western state.

The certainty by which Greek leaders proclaim their country as being part of the West can be explained by examining the history of Modern Greece. Being occupied by the Ottoman Empire, Greece did not partake in the major cultural movements of the West such as the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, Greek intellectuals were well acquainted with such developments. When the Greek War of Independence started in 1821, it became clear that Greece needed western help to achieve its independence; highlighting ancient Greece and its role in the development of western culture became a potent tool.[6] By highlighting their ancient roots, modern Greeks confirmed their cultural kinship with Europe while at the same time reminding the West of its debt to Greece. For their part, many Europeans were eager to help; by helping modern Greeks Europe was paying back its debt to their ancient ancestors. Ideas of cultural superiority also played a role. Greece, once part of the West, had fallen under the control of an eastern, Muslim empire which was part of the "other", "inferior" world; Greece should once again be a part of the West. While it would be an exaggeration to claim that cultural identity was the deciding factor, good old-fashioned self-interest also played a role; the West and Russia, which considered itself to be part of the West, came to the rescue and by the 1830s the Modern Greek state came into existence.

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[4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWzO_gpXiL4&ab_channel=anaxPaian
[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPJnoP2mSlk
[6] J. Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons*, p. 145-148.

The leaders of newly independent Greece had learned their lesson well. Greece needed to modernise as soon as possible; Europe was a modern prosperous area; Greece was depending on Europe for its security and the means to modernise; thus, Greece needed to emulate Europe. This way of thinking made great sense, most Greek leaders were either western educated themselves, or their sons and future leaders were; Greece had proclaimed its western outlook and that declaration had paid off with independence – why change now? In all fairness, the Greeks had little choice; other than a western model of modernisation and prosperity, what else was there? What did the East, labelled as backward and barbaric, have to offer? Indeed, many non-western countries (Japan comes to mind), were in the process of westernising in order to modernise. This western-oriented policy continued when Otto, prince of Bavaria, was installed as King of Greece. With him came a large number of German experts who created administrative, political, and economic systems modelled after European ones. With little thought as to the efficacy of such systems on the new state, they were put to practice transforming Greece, at least in appearance, into the first newly independent modern western state.[7] As the nineteenth century progressed, the message sent by the Greek political and cultural elite, but also by other segments of the population, was clear; Greece was part of Europe; there were no alternatives and no debate.

By the late nineteenth century, there were voices which questioned the idea that there was only one way, the western, to development. Ironically, many of those voices originated in the heart of Europe. Thinkers like Maurice Barrès and Friedrich Nietzsche questioned modernity as it was envisioned by the West, and looked inwards, to the traditions of their people, for answers. A Russian group, known as the *slavophiles*, questioned their country's adherence to western ideas and accused Peter the Great, the country's westerniser, of being the destroyer of their culture.[8] Most such individuals and groups recognised the technological superiority of the West, but challenged the idea that a healthy society should sacrifice its "soul" for "progress".[9] A Greek poet, Pericles Giannopoulos (1870-1910), became one of those intellectuals who questioned the West.[10] He rejected

[7] J. Mazis, *Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis*, p. 22-28.
[8] I. Buruma and A. Margalit, *Occidentalism*, p. 92.
[9] Ibid., p. 75.
[10] Giannopoulos, Ion Dragoumis, and Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis were part of a cohort that came of age after Greece's humiliating defeat at the hands of the Ottomans in 1897. After the defeat many started questioning everything about their country and its institutions. See E. Gazi, et al., "Rethinking Hellenism", pp. 163-189.

everything western, denied even the possibility that western people were equal to the Greeks, Indians, or Japanese.[11] Giannopoulos envisioned a return by the modern Greeks to ancient Greek ideas and models as the only way to move forward in an organic, natural way.[12] Although Giannopoulos' ideas attracted some interest from *bona fide* Greek intellectuals such as Gregorios Xenopoulos, Angelos Sikelianos, and Kostis Palamas, his flamboyant personality and theatrical suicide kept him and his ideas from being taken seriously.[13] Ion Dragoumis, a friend of Giannopoulos and many other Greek intellectuals, was not only in partial agreement with Giannopoulos, but he commanded the audience his friend lacked.

It is not unusual for challengers of the established order to be themselves members of the privileged elite; Ion Dragoumis was such a case *par excellence.* The Dragoumis family was part of the Greek elite of Constantinople even before Greek independence. Mark Dragoumis (1770-1854) came to Greece around the time of the War of Independence and participated in various legislative bodies. His son Nicholas (1809-1879) became a high official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, serving briefly as Minister in 1862-1863. Outside of his professional life, Nicholas was a man of letters who wrote some historical works and was the publisher of two scholarly journals. Nicholas's sons Mark and Stephen continued in the family tradition of politics, service, and scholarship. Mark (1840-1909) was a diplomat, ending his career as Greek Ambassador to Bucharest and Vienna; he also wrote on issues of law and established a number of philanthropic organisations. Mark's younger brother Stephen (1842-1923), the father of Ion, was the epitome of a western educated and oriented Greek of his time. After legal studies in Athens and Paris, Stephen became a judge and a high official in the Ministry of Justice. Switching to politics, Stephen was elected repeatedly to the Greek Parliament, eventually becoming member of various progressive governments, most notably as Minister of Foreign Affairs (1886-1890 and 1892-1893). Stephen Dragoumis would eventually form his own party, serving as Prime Minister (January to October, 1910), and Governor General of Crete and Macedonia. His luxurious homes in the centre of Athens and the upper-class suburb of Kifisia were places where important politicians such as Charilaos Trikoupis, men of letters such as Kostis Palamas, and important foreign visitors, Count Cobineau and Maurice Barrès, came to visit and discuss political and cultural issues. In short, Ion Dragoumis (1878-1920) was a product of a cosmopolitan, western-looking elite, located at the centre of

[11] G. Augustinos, *Consciousness and History*, p. 76.
[12] J. Mazis, "The Challenge of the West", p. 59.
[13] S. Bekatoros, *The "Noumas"*, p. 236.

Greece's political and cultural life.[14] Dragoumis became a legend in his own time and remains to this day an iconic figure revered by most Greeks. His meteoric career as a diplomat, eventually becoming Ambassador to Russia; his work on behalf of Hellenism in Macedonia and Constantinople, where he served officially as a diplomat but unofficially coordinating irredentist activities; his works as a man of letters, but also his rather public and often scandalous personal life, made him well-known and liked among many segments of the population. He was a serious man of letters, a patriot, a diplomat and politician, an intellectual, and a subject of society gossip all at the same time. [15]

Another reason that Ion Dragoumis was, and remains to this day, a national icon is the manner of his death which combines elements of heroism, martyrdom, and it even has religious connotations. It is unfortunate that Dragoumis and the great Greek statesman Eleftherios Venizelos (1864-1936) did not get along.[16] They were both patriots who wanted Greece to expand and become a stronger country. Early in his tenure as prime minister, Venizelos collaborated with Dragoumis and showed great appreciation for his talents. Up until 1912, Dragoumis was in agreement with Venizelos but things went downhill from there. In part the problem was social, Dragoumis being upper-class and Venizelos the product of the *petit bourgeois*. It was also a personal issue as Dragoumis was unwilling to recognise someone else as the leader. But most of all, the difference between the two (actually it seems to have been a one-sided enmity as Venizelos did not say anything negative about Dragoumis) was political. Venizelos, like all successful political leaders, was both realistic and opportunistic; ready to make deals to achieve partial fulfillment of Greece's irredentist goals rather than wait for a perfect solution which might never come. Dragoumis was an idealist unwilling to compromise his principles. By 1916, Greece was divided between Venizelists and anti-Venizelists in a bitter, and often bloody, struggle known as the *National Schism*. In this bitter struggle, Dragoumis became a prominent leader of the anti-Venizelist side. In the summer of 1920, there was an assassination attempt against Venizelos in Paris. When news reached Greece, mobs of Venizelists attacked their opponents; it was during the civil unrest that Venizelist para-military troops assassinated Dragoumis. The way Dragoumis carried himself during the last minutes of his life, calm, collected and dignified, made his death heroic.[17] The fact that, although he was an

[14] J. Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons*, pp. 57-61.
[15] Ibid., pp. 64-97.
[16] Ibid., pp. 97-117.
[17] Ibid., pp. 17-19.

opponent of Venizelos, he was considered by all, including Venizelos himself, to be an honest ideological adversary, added the halo of martyr to his memory. Finally, the fact that he was not involved in the conspiracy against Venizelos' life made his death a tragedy, a sign of how the National Schism was destroying Greece and the best among the Greeks. Ion Dragoumis became the innocent lamb, sacrificed to redeem the sins of the nation. For all these reasons Dragoumis was considered an important figure in Greek political and social life while alive and the passage of time has done little to dim his star among contemporary Greeks. Dragoumis was able to articulate a position challenging western cultural supremacy and spent much time conjuring what he thought was a viable alternative. From the late nineteenth century to his death in 1920, Dragoumis contemplated the issue of Greece's belonging and recorded his thoughts in his journal, correspondence, newspaper articles, and books. Surveying the development of the Modern Greek state from its inception to his time, Dragoumis concluded that what was needed was not minor reform, but rather a change in the way people viewed their culture and country, and the implementation of fundamental, radical ideas and systems.

Dragoumis believed that western influence over Greece was detrimental to his country in two major ways. First, the West had imposed political and administrative institutions which, while working well elsewhere, were not necessarily optimal for Greece. Second, and more important than the failed administrative/political aspect, Dragoumis believed that western culture had invaded Greece and was taking over, and he was afraid that everything that was good and distinctly Greek would be brushed aside. That, Dragoumis feared, would contribute to the cultural extinction of the Greek people and culture.[18]

Dragoumis believed that, in an attempt to modernise, the Greeks accepted western values uncritically and as a result diluted their own culture which was worthy of preservation.[19] He also believed that the common people of his country, not too well-educated, living and working the land away from urban centres, and the pernicious influence of the West, lived a more authentic life than their city brethren. Their culture and mores, undiluted by modernity and the West, were "true" and "real"; they were the true Greeks, and it was they who should be the example for the

[18] See I. Dragoumis, *Community, Nation and State.*

[19] Dragoumis accepted western technological advancements and wanted them for his country. He was also not against all western cultural artifacts provided they were critically evaluated and modified before accepted in Greek society: I. Dragoumis, *Those Who Are Alive*, pp. 14-15.

future, not their urban, westernised compatriots.[20] When it came to the problem of western intrusion into Greek culture, Dragoumis reserves most of his ire for his fellow urban Greeks, especially those of the middle and upper classes like himself. This privileged elite, the political, social, and economic leaders of the country, emulated western culture in an attempt to pass as "Europeans". They were convinced that everything western was superior by definition and by copying it they wanted to follow what was good and modern, and at the same time be accepted as fellow westerners by the European elites. The result was that Greece's elite was cut off from its roots; the leaders of the country occupied a cultural "no-man's-land" somewhere between the West and their own people.[21] A prime example of that was the language issue. The Greek elite tried to appeal to the Europeans by creating an artificial language. This so called *kathareuousa* (purified) language was a combination of ancient Greek and invented words. Meanwhile, the bulk of the Greeks spoke the contemporary *demotic* (popular) language which had evolved organically over the centuries. The artificial kathareuousa, incomprehensible to the masses, became Greece's official language and served to divide the Greeks along social lines. The demotic was the living Greek language; the kathareuousa an artificial creation, an attempt to appear "civilised" in the eyes of the West.[22]

While Dragoumis blamed the Greek elites for their cultural aping of the West, he put the blame squarely on the West when it came to what he perceived as the disaster of Greece's political and administrative systems. The various Greek institutions, elections and parliament, political parties, administrative and judicial structure of the state, were the creation of the Bavarians who accompanied King Otto to Greece. Dragoumis recognised the good intentions of the Bavarians but noted that they transplanted European models to Greece without modifying them. Thus, a parliamentary system was imposed on a country with no tradition of democratic processes, while administrative systems (elected mayors and city councils at the municipal level, appointed prefects at the district

[20] Some would question, this author surely does, Dragoumis' assumptions. What did he, born and raised in Athens, know of Greek rural life and culture? I believe that he was praising not so much the real, rural Greeks and their culture but rather the idealised picture he had constructed.

[21] Dragoumis' article in the Greek-American newspaper *Atlantis* (published posthumously) September 3, 1927, pp. 1-4. The title of the piece is revealing: "The Road Leads to the East, not to the West": I. Dragoumis Archives, Part A File 37.

[22] D.P. Tagopoulos, *Ten Articles*, p. 40. Also, I. Dragoumis, *Greek Civilization*, p. 189.

level), which were working well in Bavaria, were imposed on a country which had its own local government tradition. The result, opined Dragoumis, was dysfunction and a system which looked "European" from afar but was ineffective and often useless at close inspection.[23] Just as was the case with the elite culture he criticised, Dragoumis believed that the political elite of the country adopted and fostered that system in order to appear "European" abroad. Dragoumis believed that Greece will never amount to much if it did not institute fundamental, radical reforms and he was willing to point the way.

Ion Dragoumis has been credited with a serious attempt to present his vision for the future of Greece.[24] That might be true, but one cannot help but notice some romantic, even utopian notions in his thinking. Romantic, as they idolise a past social structure which might not have been as harmonious and functioning as he imagined; utopian as he assumed that under the conditions he highlighted, Greece would enter a new golden age. At times, his ideas appear strange, even reactionary; still, at others he sounds clear-headed, innovative, even prophetic.[25] One idea that sounds strange, for a man of his education, is his rejection of classical Greek learning. Most people, he believed, needed a basic education that would be of use to them in whatever profession they follow; classical education on the other hand had limited use as it prepared people to either become educators themselves or join the bloated state bureaucracy.[26] Here again Dragoumis blames the pernicious influence of westernisation; the Greek elite associated classical education with the kind of culture the West admired and thus it was overemphasised. One of his reactionary ideas, in his attempt to achieve social harmony, was that sons should have no choice of profession other than follow that of their fathers. How this would foster promoting the best and the brightest that Greece needed was left unexplained.[27] Together with the above, he envisioned a more active public role for women, thus being reactionary and progressive at the same time![28] He also found time to opine on more mundane issues such as what kind of clothes people should wear (light and loose, not the restrictive European ones) or what food people should eat (fresh fruits and vegetables,

[23] I. Dragoumis, *Greek Civilization*, p. 53.
[24] Th. Papakostantinou, *Ion Dragoumis and Political Prose*, p. 113.
[25] For more details on his ideas see J. Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons*, p. 119-144, and 185-207.
[26] J. Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons*, pp. 201-202.
[27] Ibid.,, p. 203.
[28] Ibid., p. 204.

avoid heavy foods).[29] He also advocated for art, architecture, and music to seek motifs and inspiration from Greek traditions rather than modern European models.[30]

Dragoumis believed that the modern Greek state and its institutions were dysfunctional and detrimental to national, irredentist goals.[31] Many of the remedies that Dragoumis proposed to cure the ills of the Greek state, such as better training and pay for policemen, a special academy for civil servants, regular evaluation of bureaucrats etc. were commonsense measures without a particular ideological bend.[32] Other proposals though were based on his deeply held ideological beliefs. Dragoumis attacked the government system of Greece from a number of angles. Just as the case with other institutions, he believed that the Greek political system was imposed from above with little understanding of its viability and was kept going by the elite who benefited from it and wanted to prove to Europe that Greece was a modern "European" state. He found the powers amassed in Athens, to the detriment of the provinces, a heavy burden on the people. He also noted, with good reason, that the political system in Greece appeared to be democratic but, in reality, it was created by the elites for the elites. Finally, he noted that the Greek state had become detrimental to the growth of Hellenism as it was interested in preserving and expanding its powers, with the help of foreign interests, while neglecting the needs of most Greeks who were still living in the Ottoman Empire. His solution was a new system with a small parliament, elected indirectly, and a government focussed on national affairs, such as finances, foreign policy, defense, but above all irredentism.[33] His vision was informed by his evolving political ideology which was more favourable to some of the non-democratic ideologies popular at the time.[34]

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[29] Ibid., p. 205. Dragoumis was an early proponent of what is known today as the Mediterranean diet.

[30] See J. Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons*, p. 204. Dragoumis was advocating for the kind of artistic expression based on tradition that Manos Hatzidakis and Mikis Theodorakis introduced to Greek music after the Second World War.

[31] J. Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons*, p. 135. Readers familiar with contemporary Greece will not help but agree with many of Dragoumis' criticisms of the Greek state apparatus, from the ineffective bureaucracy to the ill-trained police. His comments on the centralisation and the amassing of great powers by the central government to the detriment of local administration remains a truism.

[32] Ibid., pp. 197-198.

[33] Ibid., pp. 191-192.

[34] For more information on Dragoumis' political ideology and its affinity with that of other European intellectuals who belong in the informal category of proto

Some contemporaries of Dragoumis, his friend Giannopoulos chief among them, envisioned an alternative, non-western system for Modern Greece based on ancient Greek ideas. In short, they were looking back to a time when Greek culture reigned supreme, to counter the modern times where the West was at the peak. No one was looking at more recent times, before Greek independence, when the Greeks were subject people and when Ottoman systems, which are non-western and thus "inferior", were the norm. In an ironic twist, Ion Dragoumis, educated along western models and slated to be among those who would one day rule the modern western Greek state, turned his back on the West and looked to the discredited East, and especially the models used by Greeks during their Ottoman subjugation, for inspiration. His blueprint, he thought, would assure Greece's independence from western cultural hegemony which in turn would culminate in a renaissance for Hellenism and a major power realignment.

Dragoumis had many stimuli which motivated him to look to the Greeks under the Ottomans for answers to modern problems, but two items stand out. First, he believed that western influence was more of a danger to Hellenism than the Ottomans. After all, most Greeks had lived under Ottoman control for four to five hundred years, but they were able to keep their culture almost intact. On the other hand, in less than one hundred years of independence, the West was able to inflict major damage to Greek culture.[35] Another catalyst to Dragoumis' ideas was his visit to the island of Samothrace in 1908. Still part of the Ottoman Empire, the island was left alone to manage its affairs with minimal interference from the authorities. Dragoumis observed traditional local government in action and was impressed by the autonomy of the Greeks under the Turks; an autonomy that local government in the westernised Greek state did not have.[36] Dragoumis' proposal for the ideal Greek state included a robust local government based on the traditional model of *δημογεροντία* (council of elders), a self-selected body of local notables dedicated to local affairs with no national political aspirations. This local council would have wide authority on education, religion (buildings, personnel etc.) and public works. The local council would have the right to levy taxes to support its work and, in the process, would be fairly autonomous from the central

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fascists, that is thinkers who articulated ideas similar to Fascism but before that Italian political party existed, see J. Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons*, pp. 119-144.

[35] I. Dragoumis, *My Sense of Hellenism*, p. 81.

[36] Dragoumis recorded his impressions of the island and its people in his book, *The Island of Samothrace.*

government.[37] Dragoumis believed that his proposal would result in the central government focussing exclusively on national affairs; while local government, and most of all an invigorated population, would take control of its own affairs and fate, rather than passively wait for Athens to solve its problems. It would also make life in the provinces better and thus stop the hemorrhaging of young, capable people to the country's capital.

These proposals by Dragoumis represent just the tip of the iceberg of his intentions. His most radical idea was that Greece should re-orient itself and turn its attention and efforts to the East rather than the West.[38] Ion Dragoumis had come to the conclusion that even though Greece wanted to be part of the West culturally and otherwise, the rest of Europe would never accept Greece as an equal. At the same time Greece was perceived in the Ottoman East, among its many diverse people, as an advanced culture. Greece's future, then, was in the East; the country should cultivate friendly and closer relations with the East and in the process assume a cultural hegemony and carve a sphere of influence. Ironically Dragoumis was proposing that Greece should do to the East what the West was doing to Greece. He advocated Greek cultural penetration and hegemony of the East; just as the West viewed Greek culture as inferior, so did Dragoumis discount the cultures of the people of the East. This can only be acceptable if one agrees with Dragoumis and locates Greek culture to the East and not to the West. In short, Dragoumis was attacking all the basic cultural assumptions of Modern Greece. He rejected the West and claimed that Greek culture did not belong in that sphere; he pointed to the East as Greek culture's natural locale, and identified the Greek culture as it had developed under the Ottoman Empire, rather than its ancient predecessor, as the cultural icon to follow. Dragoumis was an iconoclast on a large scale and on a large canvas!

In an attempt to create a viable alternative to the cultural and political dominance of the West, Ion Dragoumis, and his close friend and collaborator Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis, came up with the plan known as the *Eastern Idea* or *Eastern Federation.*[39] This idea called for

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[37] J. Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons*, p. 193-195.

[38] The title of his article mentioned on footnote 18 ("The Road Leads to the East, not to the West") is indicative of his way of thinking.

[39] This was a complex, nuanced, and multifaceted idea and covering it in detail is beyond the scope of this work. For more details see: J. Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons,* p. 161-184. It has also been assumed that Dragoumis was the main creator of this idea and that his friend Souliotis-Nikolaidis contributed just a little to the overall theory. Nothing can be farther from the truth; Souliotis-Nikolaidis

Greece and the Ottoman Empire to enter into a voluntary political union; a federation which would allow the different people of the new state to retain their culture. While the union would be voluntary, it was believed that soon Greek culture would prevail, and the new state would become culturally Greek. This would safeguard Greek culture, push back on western encroachment, and allow the majority of ethnic Greeks, still part of the Ottoman state, to unite with their brethren of the Greek state. At the same time, the Eastern Federation would form a powerful state, a bulwark against western cultural and political hegemony. This was an interesting idea that went nowhere; the aftermath of the Balkan Wars and the First World War rendered a Greco-Turkish federation impossible. Also, one cannot help but wonder if the Great Powers of the day would have allowed a potential rival to come into existence. Finally, Dragoumis was not sincere about a federation of equals; it is clear from his writings that the Eastern Federation would be eventually politically and culturally dominated by Greeks or, if that were impossible, the federation would be abandoned in favour of a new, larger Greek state which would be non-western in orientation.

Ion Dragoumis was, and remains to this day, a popular figure among Greeks of all classes and political beliefs. His credentials as a patriot are unassailable and most of his ideas are viewed favourably. At the same time, his calls for a counter to the West failed to attract attention; how can one explain this dichotomy?[40] I would argue that, just as the Europeans saw in ancient Greece their own roots, so the Greeks saw in modern Europe what would have been the natural evolution of their culture had the Ottoman era not intervened to stunt its growth. The various Greek elites contemplating Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire were often educated in the West, or along western models, or were living in the West. For them, western ideas and ways of government were the only paradigm.[41] Even those elites who were not western in orientation, such as many local notables, educated their sons and grandsons along

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contributed as much, and at times more than his friend; for details see J. Mazis, *Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis*, pp. 97-128.

[40] Ironically, after the Second World War it was the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), a party which espoused ideas that Dragoumis would reject wholeheartedly, that opposed the West and looked to the East for answers. This of course was strictly due to political considerations; East for KKE meant the Soviet Union, not an "eastern" way of thinking in general and certainly not a political, social, and cultural system based on Greek traditional models.

[41] Ironically, Dragoumis' family fitted the example of such western educated and oriented families. See J. Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons*, pp. 57-61.

western models so that by the mid-nineteenth century there was a western outlook among Greek elites and even the emerging middle class.[42] Slowly but surely, as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, western education and cultural orientation kept reaching lower in Greek society. Even in times of national disasters, when anger against the powerful in the West reached a crescendo, such as after the 1897 loss to the Ottoman Empire, and more recently during the 2010 financial hardship Greeks railed against the West but at the end of the day chose to remain where they thought they belong. It might have been inability to see alternatives, or fear of the unknown, or a case of choosing prosperity over other considerations. One can speculate forever but the fact remains that the Greeks have been voting traditionally for pro-western political parties. Equally important, they have been voting informally, choosing cultural artefacts, from those of high culture to pop culture, and a way of life that has been and continues to be located well within western norms. Ion Dragoumis is being honoured, but his suggestions are being politely ignored. Nevertheless, some Greeks, western-oriented as they might be, including this writer, cannot help but wonder at times if we as people were too quick to dismiss Dragoumis the prophet, ignore his warnings, and wholeheartedly embrace a culture which we should have been more selective in choosing.

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[42] Dragoumis' friend and fellow Eurosceptic, Souliotis-Nikolaidis, came from a non-elite background. While his grandfather was a product of the Greek pre-revolutionary tradition his son (Souliotis's father) received the western education which allowed his family to join the westernized middle class. See J. Mazis, *Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis,* p. 43-45.

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CHAPTER THREE

LEROS:
FOUCAULT'S NODE

NENI PANOURGIÁ

Leros: an island in the Aegean Sea, part of the Dodecanese, off the coast of Turkey, sitting at the crossroads and the crosshairs of East and West, Europe and Asia, the wake and water runoff of civilisation and its discontents. Leros, an island that has acquired the weight of its actuality and the burden of its metaphorisation. Leros the island and "Leros" (in quotation marks) the metonymy of abjection. A place saturated by its negative dialectics, where the "not fit even for Leros" has been the knee-jerk response for the unwanted, the marginal, the abjected. "Not fit even for Leros" said, for instance, a paediatrician about a new-born with cerebral palsy when I asked what would happen to the child. And, in the course of its history it is evident and plainly obvious that nothing has been "not fit even for Leros" because Leros has been produced by the modern State as the space that can be expanded to absorb everything and anything, an actualised *anti-care* space, where care is being elided, foreclosed, withheld, explicitly, as policy, as biopolitics, as necropolitics, as sacropolitics.[1] It is the space of anti-care that precedes what Jason De Léon has called "Hostile Terrain"[2] by about almost one hundred years.

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[1] I take the concept of sacropolitics from David Nugent, *The Encrypted State.* Biopolitics is by now a concept intimately connected with Foucault's theory of power. Necropolitics was conceptualised as a property of state power by Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics".

[2] Jason De Léon's *The Land of Open Graves* fixes the Sonoran Desert as a state-designated Hostile Terrain. De Léon, starting there, has put together the global project *HT94 (Hostile Terrain '94)*
https://www.undocumentedmigrationproject.org/hostileterrain94.

Caserma Sommergibili, the barracks of the submariners, originally built in 1927. In 1948 it became the main building of the Royal School of Trades and remained in operation until 1964 when the RST was discontinued. In 1967 the building was used by the Junta to house the political prisoners transported to Leros from Gyaros (photograph by Neni Panourgiá, 2018)

Leros is Foucault's node,[3] as it concentrates the forcefulness of governmentality, the efforts of power to exert itself as much onto institutions and their actions as on the minute folds of the everyday

[3] I first developed the concept of Leros as *Foucault's node* in 2016, after an invitation by Paul B. Precidiado to write something on Leros for the *documenta14* Public Program "Parliament of the Bodies" at Kassel in April 2017. The Public Program at *d14* was torpedoed by the AdF Party and was cancelled. I first presented the concept at the keynote address that I was asked to deliver at the Hightower Conference at Kalamazoo College in 2017 and developed it further in 2018 at the conference *Μέρες Μνήμης και Δημοκρατίας* (*Days of Memory and Democracy*) organised by the Σύλλογος Φυλακισθέντων και Εξορισθέντων Αντιστασιακών (*Association of Imprisoned and Exiled Political Resisters)* with the support of the Ministry of the Aegean and Island Policy and the Municipality of Leros. On this concept rests my entire argument presented in my monograph on Leros (2020) *Λέρος. Η γραμματική του εγκλεισμού*. (Νεφέλη) and at https://nefeli.fairead.net/leros (*Leros. The Grammar of Confinement*). Penelope Petsini has used the term and a quote from Panourgiá 2020 as the title and description for her contribution to the Athens Photo Festival 2022 at the Benaki Museum.

practices of the individual in its pursuit of the construction of the ideal docile, placated, indifferent citizen. Leros contains and problematises all of Foucault's concerns and places each one of them under the structure of the lived example. The military, the school, the camp of the political prisoner, the rehabilitation camp, the military prison, the refugee camp, each one, in their seeming discontinuities, facilitates the saltatory forward movement of the force of power[4] and underlines Foucault's "continuism": "no one is more of a continuist that I am", he declared in his interview on method.[5] And Leros as exile, the island of human refuse that returns us to a different ethics, moving away from the morality of numbers. I will borrow from Osbert Lancaster (1947) who was writing about Distomo what could have been written about Leros for the entire first half of the twentieth century: Leros "has always born the mark of extreme poverty",[6] a blot in the circle of Rhodes, Kos, Kalymnos. "She is a Leria", my interlocutors on Kalymnos would say about the brides who had married into Kalymnian families, the word carrying the unmistakable tint of poverty and immorality; poverty that has a particular stain carried over to its inhabitants. In fact, the level at which Leros has been an abjected and overlooked space has been such that publications on the Italian Empire repeatedly fail to mention its existence. In an article in 2018 under the title "On Italy's Internal and External Colonies", Mia Fuller writes on Eritrea, Libya, Sicily, South Tyrol, and, separately, Alto Adige, but does not even mention Leros.[7] In a collected volume edited by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller in 2005 entitled *Italian Colonialism*, there is only one ten-page article, by Nicolas Doumanis, which deals with the brutality of the Italian Occupation of the Dodecanese. In the chronology that the two editors offer as a guide, they go from 1911, when Italy declared war on the Ottoman Empire with an attack on Tripolitania in Libya, to 1924 when Britain cedes Somalia (Kismayu) to Italy. There is one reference to the 1912 transfer of the Dodecanese from the Ottoman to the Italian Empire but no more mention as to how the Italian Empire ended up with the Dodecanese in 1923. There is mention of Mussolini's collapse and his German-propped puppet government at Saló in 1943, but no mention of the

[4] I have written extensively on using the nodes of Ranvier as an heuristic and analytical device in the process of reading questions of continuity and discontinuity of the power of the state. See Panourgiá, 2020 *Λέρος. Η γραμματική του εγκλεισμού*. (Νεφέλη) and at https://nefeli.fairead.net/leros.

[5] Michel Foucault "Questions of Method", *The Foucault Effect*, p. 76.

[6] O. Lancaster, *Classical Landscape with Figures*, p. 151.

[7] *A Moving Border: Alpine Cartographies of Climate Change*, eds. Ferrari, Pasqual and Bagnato.

decisive Battle of Leros that gave the Germans their last victory, pushed the Allies away from the coast of Turkey, and both inspired *The Guns of Navarone* and gave Ian Fleming his James Bond, especially *Thunderball*.[8] In the same publication, Mia Fuller, writing on the architectural project of the Italian Empire, mentions all the re-built and reconstructed places of North Africa, mentions the aesthetic interventions on the Hotel of the Roses in Rhodes, but does not mention the two places that the Empire built from scratch as showcases of the spirit of the empire, Sabaudia, outside of Rome, and Leros which was the primary playground for the war games of the Italians. Leros appears in histories of architecture, but not in architectural cultural analyses. Architects have paid attention to Leros because of its particular style, but not historians of the Italian Empire. All these omissions and elisions are not surprising at all, though, because the modern Greek paradigm has been muted, elided, ignored outside of Greece, especially in the western scholarly record. This is not a gripe. This is the explosion of an epistemological exclusion.

There is no intellectual exertion in what I will ask you to do, we have all thought upon it, have been taught and have taught it, have argued for its usefulness: let's think about a space – Greece, so, in this instance, a country – as a body, a living body that bears the track marks of its history as the body of a drug addict does, marks that track and trace the bloodlines and the lifelines of this body-as-country. This is not just a metaphor, and I am being fully aware of the danger of thinking about a country in terms of a person – I think of Greece not as something inanimate in need of metaphorisation, but as the constellation of millions of psyches that cry their implication. And I want to do this from within a specific space of this constellation, conjuring topoi that have defined the place and have marked its psyche. Topoi that have produced specific lexical and glossal economies, economies that preserve, recycle, spend.

I am looking at the intractability of categories, the impossibility of an ethical extraction of politics from geography, of economics from psycho-graphies. I am looking at the impossibility of maintaining distinct and pristine classifications that collapse on themselves under the weight of their own actions. I am looking at the existence of such multiple-layered

[8] See Panourgiá 2020: 65-75 for an extended discussion and bibliography on Leros and James Bond. See, also, Junio Valerio Borghese, *Decima Flottiglia MAS*; https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/jamesbond/9560403/Historian-reveals-the-Second-World-War-hero-who-inspired-the-creation-of-James-Bond.html; Angelo Paratico, "Emilio Bianchi. The Emilio Largo of Ian Fleming's Thunderball" *GINGKO*, 29.8.2015 https://www.gingkoedizioni.it/emilio-bianchi-the-emilio-largo-of-ian-fleming-thunderball/.

classifications and categorisations on the track of history of a particular place, and I am looking at a particular node, I call it Foucault's node, of forced movements bearing the indelible and still extant tint of barracks, schools, political prisons, exile camps, psychiatric hospitals, refugees, migrants. I am looking at the govermentalities of infrastructures and the architectonics of the apparatus of the state that don't get penetrated by the act of voting or the execution of the acts of democracy. The architectonics that organise the conceptualisation, planning, and actualisation of an edifice, whether tactile or numinous. I am looking at the *khôros* of Leros.

Thinking on that traumatic moment that was to put an end to all traumatic moments, H.G. Wells's "the war that will end war",[9] the First World War, Walter Benjamin concentrated on a minute conceptual detail that has since exploded all minute details.

> A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body.[10]

Benjamin, of course, was thinking about war and the technological advancements that had produced a different landscape for its comprehensibility, when he talked about the only two, unchanged constants: the clouds and the fragility of the human body. This comprehension translates with difficulty – it can be intellectually, or ethically accessed, but it fails to gather together the emotional force necessary to mobilise a popular movement. It moves across affective spaces haltingly, an experience that resists its own translation.

> *Johanne was a Greek-American woman whose mother, at the age of 17, in 1942, in the middle of the Second World War and at the height of the great famine that hit Greece, had been brought to the US – to a farm outside of Lincoln, NE – as a bride to an already established Greek farmer aged 50 at the time. The mother repeated the story often: she would go out in the farm at night when there was a moon because the moon was the only sight that was familiar to her, the only recognizable*

[9] H.G. Wells, *The War to End All Wars*, that after the war would become the moniker "the war that would end all wars".

[10] My translation from W. Benjamin, "Der Erzähler. Netrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesstow" (1936) *Gessammette Schriften*, Bd. 2, p. 439.

part of the environment, the only thing that she knew that Greece and Lincoln, NE, had in common.[11]

Sitting on the Oudegracht in Utrecht, I watch the small boats go by – in the morning they transport equipment, they carry ferry workers, sometimes older couples sitting leisurely on the deck, water bicycles with adolescent boys and girls. In the evening people canoe, or they slide up and down the canal in small row boats, sometimes startling the ducks, larger boats filled with locals having dinner onboard, enjoying their drinks, having fun, being happy, happy as human beings ought to be. They know where they are, where they are going, what time they will be in bed at night; they can stop the boat any instant they want and hop out, or just rest, and they can turn around and go home if they feel seasick. For that moment they don't have a care in the world.

But compare that idyllic scene with the scene present in this BBC video from July 18th, 2016, designed by Tom Hannen, Alexandra Buccianti, Dwan Kaoukji and Theo Hannides using clips of sea journeys that bring refugees across the Aegean from Turkey to Lesvos.[12]

How do we write about this? How do we write precisely on the fissure of such existence, being-as-human? What sorts of intellectual capacities are demanded in order not simply to describe and analyse the fissure but, more importantly, to suture it back together? I am not even asking about making others, outside of this colony of intellectuals where we exist, to understand it or act upon it – we have failed miserably at that as intellectuals. We need thickly written texts, saturated with geographies, histories, emotions, multiple economies; we need to recognise and agree that forced movements of populations are not cosmopolitanisms.

Leros

1912

The infrastructural construction on Leros began when the Dodecanese Islands were passed from the Ottoman Empire to Italy in 1912 and secured in 1923 through the Treaty of Lausanne. With the Treaty of London that was signed as a result of the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Italo-Turkish war, the Dodecanese islands, and Leros as part of them, were passed from the Ottomans to the Italian Empire. Turkey disputed the clauses

[11] This quote comes from one of my interlocutors during research that I conducted in 1987 for an unrealised project on the Greek-American presence in the Inter-Mountain West between 1880 and 1950.

[12] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1BLsySgsHM

of the Treaty and the Dodecanese remained under Italian imperial occupation but as an Ottoman dominion. In 1920 the Treaty of Sèvres, that produced the British Mandate in Palestine and the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon, officially returned the Dodecanese to Italy. The Treaty of Lausanne, in 1923, ratified the Treaty of Sèvres and the Dodecanese were never returned to Turkey.

1924
The Italian Empire took possession of the Dodecanese islands and decided to build its main naval base on Leros. Leros was then designated as the main naval base of the new *Italia Imperiale*, and construction of the base and the buildings that I am looking at was completed in 1927. Barracks to house 7000 *marinieri* were built, along with administrative buildings, and a new economy was created on the island that was almost exclusively dependent upon the base (for commerce and construction). The project intensified after Cesare Maria de Vecchi was appointed Governor of the Dodecanese in 1936, and started the building of Lakki (Porto Lago) according to the principles of *razionalismo italiano* and *architettura razionale*.

1943
The collapse of the Italian Empire allowed Germany to take over the island after a disastrous battle with the British Navy, a battle that has been named Churchill's Folly, because it gave the German army its last victory. The Germans used the barracks as POW camps for the Italian and British prisoners. With the collapse of the Reich, Leros became a British Protectorate and the barracks were used as a POW camp for the German army.

1947
Leros was unified with Greece.

1949
Royal Schools of Trades were established at Lepida [Lakki] as a re-education camp for young adults of Leftist parents, mainly but not exclusively orphaned by the Civil War. 5000 young men went through there. Approximately 200 local workers worked there as master trainers and in the maintenance of the buildings. A few prisoners from the criminal courts were also sent there by special dispensation. The schools closed in 1964. When the first 1500 young boys (and later girls) were transported to Leros, one journalist mentioned in a main newspaper of Athens that the

island, ecologically and financially destroyed by the war, was resurrected, "κυριολεκτικώς ανέζησεν" [literally resurrected] because the children, for a few years, were cared for by the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe [CARE]. CARE made available to the Royal Trade Schools anything and everything that they might have needed, from pencils and chocolates to Nescafe and their daily bread, that the children were passing through the chain-link fence to the little Lerian children who were walking up to the grounds to beg for them. From 1950 until 1964, the schools became the place for socialisation of indigent adolescents from the Greek provinces.

1957

Establishment of the Colony of Psychiatric Patients of Leros (Αποικία Ψυχοπαθών Λέρου). The financial strain placed on the island as a result of the unification with Greece forced deputies from the Dodecanese to lobby the government in order to have some of the buildings taken over by the Ministry of Health for the establishment of a psychiatric hospital so that the conditions of overcrowding in the existing hospitals (a result of the end of the Civil War when fighters of the Democratic Army of Greece (Δημοκρατικός Στρατός Ελλάδας) had been hospitalised because of the torture on the exile islands or the strain of the fighting) would be alleviated – the overcrowding meant that 3-4 persons would be sleeping on one bed. On foreign advice, a rural psychiatric colony was established on Leros: 4000 psychiatric patients and severely developmentally impaired persons were sent there on the premise of the intractability of their condition. They were denied the right to visitors for two years. The patients were transported on navy vessels with a number pinned on their clothes that corresponded to their names. Some of those pieces of paper fell off during the transport, so that a number of patients remained nameless, even to themselves, for the rest of their lives there.

1967-1970

While retaining the psychiatric hospital, the Greek military junta used the remaining buildings as a camp where it held approximately 4000 political prisoners, spread over two locations, Partheni and Lakki. Under international pressure the camp was closed in 1970. The first transport landed in Partheni, on the northern part of the island, where the exiles were housed in old military storage buildings. The second one took place in October and landed at Lakki where the exiles were housed in the semi-deserted buildings of the Royal Schools of Trades (Caserma Sommergibili, Submarine barracks and Caserma Marinai, Navy barracks). Psychiatric

patients and prisoners came into contact when the prisoners visited the hospital. One of those political prisoners described the scene to me in 2003, tears streaming down his face not because he had been imprisoned but because through the barbed wire he, and other prisoners, could see fighters of the Democratic Army who had fought against the Nazis in the Second World War walking around naked, unshaven, soiled, crazed from the tortures that they had endured at the hands of the anticommunist government during the Civil War.

1970s-1992

The psychiatric hospital remained operative and achieved such levels of dysfunction and abuse that it became synonymous with the scandal of psychiatric malpractice, until a de-institutionalisation programme effectively closed down the dormitory buildings. In the late 1970s, a group of training psychiatrists at the hospital, what became known as The Group of Leros, realised the magnitude of the abuse and, in 1981, exposed it to the national press and demanded radical reform. In response, the government forbade the transport of new patients to the hospital. In 1982 the photographer Nikos Panayiotopoulos documented visually the conditions at the hospital in a special segment of the popular magazine Ταχυδρόμος. In 1985, a group of Italian psychiatrists from Trieste, headed by Franco Basaglia, the psychiatrist leading the de-institutionalisation of psychiatry in Italy, disclosed the conditions to the international community. In 1988, the English newspaper *The Observer* visited the island and exposed the hospital in a front-page article with the title "Europe's Dirty Secret". In the same year, Franco Rotelli, who had succeeded Basaglia, visited Leros and made specific recommendations towards a de-institutionalisation procedure to be observed and documented by an international body that would include psychiatrists, intellectuals, and journalists.

1985

The infamous 16th pavilion, also known as "the pavilion of the naked", was established in the old Navy barracks, away from the rest of the buildings. It closed in 1994.

1989

As part of the de-insitutionalisation process, Félix Guattari visited the psychiatric hospital with his wife, Joséphine who took a series of photographs. Guattari kept a diary of his journey through Leros and Daphni (the main psychiatric hospital of Greece), from 27 September to 11 October. He published the diary, along with the photographs taken by

Joséphine, in the French newspaper *La Libération* on 13 October, 1989. Sometime later he wrote (but did not publish) a text called *De Leros à La Borde*, a stochastic text on psychiatric practice as he knew it from La Borde, where he had been practicing since 1955, and Leros. The two texts were united in an edition in 2011 under the title *De Leros à La Borde* with a preface by Marie Depussé and an epilogue by Jean Oury (both major figures in the movement of de-institutionalisation of psychiatry and friends of Guattari). The diary was translated into Greek by Elisabeth Kouki, and with an introduction by the Greek psychiatrist Katerina Matsa, it was published in 2015.

1990s
In 1992, the gradual de-institutionalisation of the psychiatric hospital began. The patients moved to free-standing houses throughout the island.

2016
Establishment of the Regional Asylum Office of Leros which includes a Centre of Reception and Identification (hot-spot). Under its jurisdiction fall all petitions for International Protection of Foreigners or Stateless Persons (ανιθαγενείς).

2022
Establishment of a new closed facility for refugees and asylum seekers to be self-managed by Lerian shopkeepers and the incarcerated people who will be sent there on indeterminate time-lines, expressly forbidden from going outside of the camp. Lerians are convinced that it is the particularity of their *khôros* that has made this decision possible.

Foucault's node

The node of Leros, then, more so than any other place in Greece (or, even, globally) becomes even tighter, intractable by the fact that any of the institutional allo-ascriptions of being are resolutely non-agential. Whether as in the military, in the insane asylum, the prison, the rehabilitation/training camp, the tint of "Leria", the refugee asylum hot-spot, Leros raises the legal persona and the psychic person, where there is no possibility for a state-of-being that is anything other than exilic. It is a place that keeps tightening the tension between the East and the West, the established notions of what is civilised and what not, of what produces meaning and its orientation, of what connects Benjamin, the starry night, and the moon outside of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Foucault has noted that the violence of institutions is not located in a performed brutality, but, rather in their prolix technologies and methodologies as they slither through and inhabit the corners and shadows of the social apparatus; in the recognition of their genealogy. Foucault produces this epistemological string theory through a curious methodology – he refuses to succumb to the enumerative projects of historians and ethicists and resists any genealogical linearity, i.e., K does not come between J and L, in an analytical frame that engages a contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous. A past that should not be and a present that shouldn't be; a present in the past already in the future.

The problem with writing about this, then, is not one of representation – this thing, and its thingness have been presented and re-presented through the new technologies of representation, especially as such technologies have contracted and have been themselves drafted into artistic and literary modalities of thinking, from photography and poetry to performance art and music. So, we all know what this thing looks like, what it does, what is done to it, what it inhabits and who inhabits it. The pressing question right now, having taken representation and its crisis as axiomatic difficulties, remains one of the ethics of writing, the question of the possibility of another vocabulary of politics: how to write about it in a manner that will understand and acknowledge the act of writing in the production of its subject; how to walk the tension line between the subject and the object of the act of writing; how to articulate a demand for an ethics that will not lapse into sentimentality, humanitarianism, into the aestheticisation of politics or, maybe even more importantly, the politicisation of aesthetics, in fact how to think about the possibility of the effects of the psyche, and complicate it as a political possibility even further. How to write not about an *other* out there, on a boat, in a hotspot, in a transitory camp, who suffers, but about who is the writer's own self; how to think not about a "there-there" but about a there that is always already irrevocably also a "here". Let's think about a new iteration of ethics, a "synth-ethics"[13] and repurpose it, recalibrate it, let's call it "synthetic ethics", an ethics that drafts emotions into its calibration, as a motor for politics, a gesture that would certainly obligate us to encounter and consider negative emotions as just as forceful a motor.[14]

Let's then move away from numbers, strategically bypass (but not disregard) the numbers of dead, maimed, contorted bodies and

[13] The term "synth-ethic" appeared as the title of an exhibition at the Museum of Natural History in Vienna in May 2014. https://www.nhm-wien.ac.at/en/synth-ethic ; see also https://www.biofaction.com/synth-ethic/

[14] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xS-Q2sgNjl8

psyches, and train our analytical eye to other forms of loss that require the stewardship of care, such as the loss of all familiarity with existence, a familiarity that only celestial points produce — the moon, the starry night. Not because the numbers of the dead, the homeless, the discarded, are not horrific, but precisely because they are horrific, simply because the loss of even one life, one home, one body should be equally unbearable, equally disastrous, equally inhumane, brutal, and barbaric as that of entire civilisations. Let's turn to a differently articulated ethical humanism of care, an ethical humanism that will resist the imperialism of numbers and numerals, the facility of enumerative technologies (because, really, how else can they be resisted?).

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CHAPTER FOUR

(RE)STAGING *THERMOPYLAE*: BARRIERS, BORDERS AND THE HUMANITARIAN SUPPLY CHAIN AT THE EUROPEAN FRONTIER

CHLOE HOWE HARALAMBOUS

Introduction

In September 2015, at the height of the "the summer of migration" that had come to shake Europe with a sudden and ungovernable influx of people on the move through the Aegean borders of the EU, the mayor of the island of Lesvos agreed to co-sponsor a German NGO's plan for a transit camp in a derelict cheese factory at the crossroads of the village of Klio. The camp, which was projected to extend into a stretch of public ground, was suspended a day into its operations, when the village council revolted against both the island mayor and the NGO, and squatted on the site in an act of popular resistance: the refusal to yield municipal land. The villagers united their "movement" under, and borrowed epic substance from, the name *Thermopylae* or "Hot-Gates", purporting to emulate the 480 B.C. battle of the 300 Spartans against the Persian invasion.

The sudden migrant[1] influx and attendant national and European panics had propelled the strategically placed but otherwise forsaken

[1] In this chapter, I use "migrant" as an umbrella term to describe people on the move. I make no distinction among their motivations, which range from the escape from war and poverty to the pursuit of educational opportunities and the advancement of postcolonial emancipatory projects. Strictly for the purposes of Section III, my use of the term "refugee" does not mean to describe the actual people who live in that category. Rather, I am interested in how the "refugee" emerges as a signifier of moral and economic value in the context of the humanitarian supply chain and in the informal (micro-) economies of the border village.

village into prominence. Poised at the meeting point between the island's main tarmac road to the city and the dirt tracks leading down the mountains to some of the most "frequented" landing sites for migrant boats crossing from Turkey, the village of 300 impoverished farmers and shepherds, elderly and unemployed beneficiaries of meagre benefits, and day labourers had acquired the status of an infrastructural gem for state and humanitarian efforts to reduce the "crisis" to a semblance of order. For the villagers who saw this, maintaining possession of those crossroads (the "pass"), signified a sense of possessing inordinate power *over* the forces whose interests had come to coincide at their door. Provisionally, it allowed local resistance to have an impact on a proliferation of actors and scales: the unorganised force of the incoming migrants; the municipal government charged with the responsibility for regulating the influx; the national government anxious to funnel emergency humanitarian funds from the European Union into new infrastructure; Europe itself, which had descended on the small island in the guise of humanitarian organisations and volunteers or as European Commission specialists interested in deploying the Aegean islands as a buffer zone between the migrants and their desired destinations in the wealthier member-states of the European north.

It is tempting to read the villagers as allotting the role of Xerxes' colossal army to the migrants viewed by the right wing as encroaching from the East and threatening to overrun the continent, and to posit their act of resistance as a sensationalised but relatively minor instance of local racism – a "clash of civilisations" replicating the polarising forces that posited the legend of *Thermopylae* as an early instance of a consciousness of Europe as a regional entity and as signalling a set of common (to Sparta, Greece and Europe) political interests separate and opposed to the East. But much as conditions seemed geared to facilitate an outlet for their frustration onto the migrants, the villagers did not take it. In reality, the migrants themselves did not feature as protagonists in the drama of *Thermopylae* but rather as the condition of possibility for the villagers' encounter with the forces they had come to identify as their *real* oppressors in embodied form: the German NGO, understood as the money-guzzling emissary of Northern Europe's interior colonisers.

After all, the "refugee crisis" was not the only crisis with which the villagers had had to reckon that summer; it had come at the tail end of the vanquishing of the Left project in Europe and the reserve of hope in the battle for social and political rights that it had succeeded, for a brief moment, in replenishing. The "capitulation" of the Syriza government to its creditors in July 2015 had signified to many Greeks the collapse of a

final front of national sovereignty, and a surrender to Northern European tutelage (specifically "German" tutelage), allowing Greece to be transformed into a laboratory for the neoliberalisation of Europe. Meanwhile, the "refugee crisis", in which the borders of Greece featured also as the borders of Europe, was itself becoming increasingly a *European* (legal, financial, ideological and administrative) affair, in which Germany again took a leading managerial role. It was no great surprise then, that in the incursions of the German NGO into their municipal land, the villagers should have seen an imperial venture: an extension of those forces which, having divested the island population of social and political rights through austerity – excluding them from Europe politically conceived – now descended upon *their land* to sanction European *territoriality*. [See endnote 1] In resisting those incursions, they thus ventured a critical reading of the recent political and economic history of Greece in relation to the European Union, through the rubric of the border struggle.

Starting from a critical anthropological exploration of the villagers' mobilisation and their eventual retreat, this chapter attempts a critique of capitalism from a vantage point of margins – national, European, territorial and economic – by unpacking the assemblage of forces brought together at *Thermopylae* in order to isolate the meeting between local forms of social and economic organisation elaborated around the "refugee crisis" and the transnational political and economic structures of humanitarianism. Both purported to operate outside the constraints of state and capitalism: the former in response to the increasing depletion of prospects of formal employment wrought by austerity; the latter by claiming status as both "non-governmental" and "not-for-profit".

While the recent "refugee crisis" has often been analysed from vantage-points which either bear only circuitous relations to capitalism (frames that are cultural, philanthropic, social, political, legal etc.), which take temporally and spatially exploded views (locating the origins of the crisis in past imperialisms), or which locate the link between capital and migration in agents (certain overtly capitalistic agents seeking to exploit cheap migrant labour), my use of capitalism as a lens onto migration takes less of an interest in the agency of class forces. Instead, I want to consider the conjuncture between capitalism and migration at the moment of their respective crises: as a particular articulation of forces that *appear* to bear only marginal relations to capitalism but which are nevertheless structured by its logic. Following the humanitarian supply chain, this chapter reads those articulations as primarily logistical operations, integrating and connecting a heterogeneity of actors, interests and value systems through processes of extraction (see Mezzadra and Nielsen 2017).

The villagers drew power from their position at a critical geopolitical nexus, at a point of vulnerability in multiple overlapping logistical chains: Firstly, poised at the entry-way to Europe, the micro-economies of transport and food sales operated by the locals to cater to the migrants took up where the smuggler trail left off just across the narrow stretch of sea, both constitutive of a discrete and separate enterprise and integrated into the logistical chain of the shadow side of the "migration industry" (see Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen 2012). Secondly, as the first European border, the landing point of Klio constituted a critical hurdle in the map of the "autonomy of migration" that had been rendered so clearly during the summer of migration (see Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2011). Thirdly, for the same reason, it was the first line for the defence of Europe by an assemblage of national and European forces such as the European Border Agency (Frontex), the European Commission, the European Asylum Service (EASO) and the Greek state, seeking to conduct the influx of migrants through the length of the country onto the Balkan route. Fourthly, and finally, Klio was a critical logistical node in the bidirectional humanitarian supply chain which both collaborated with state and European actors to deliver aid *to* the border, and also worked in the opposite direction, to support the northwards passage of migrants *from* the borders of Europe towards its centre.

In 2015, these transnational value chains, separate in themselves, came by chance to converge at the villagers' door. In interrupting them, theirs was a "logistics struggle" (Cuppini et al., 2015). After all, it seems apposite to regard *Thermopylae* as interpreting something of the nature of logistics, not only for its expression of their military origins, but for its exposure of the primary paradox of logistics: the vulnerability of massive trans-territorial flow to counter-pressure exerted with precision at a single point. While invested in exploring the ways in which *Thermopylae* spoke to the impact of such struggles, I am also wary of laying excessive emphasis on the radical and oppositional nature of the local and particular as a threat to the idealised smooth space of global logistical flows. Following Anna Tsing (2005), I have attempted to be attentive to the ways in which such "frictions" – messy spaces of local heterogeneity, indeterminacy and resistance – not only challenge, but often become *constitutive* of the articulations underpinning global connections and supply chains. In other words, I have sought to foreground the ways in which, even as the operations of capital are presumed to flatten difference and aspire to uniformity, they in fact often *require* those forces of diversity and abrasion (Tsing 2009), seeking to appropriate and make them *productive*.

A final note: the reader will notice that while I term *Thermopylae* a "border struggle", this chapter omits the actions, desires and subjectivities of people on the move. This is largely due to the ways in which I have sought to read along the grain of the villagers' narratives in which, as mentioned, migrants featured as a condition of possibility for an encounter in which they were not protagonists. And yet I stress that the mobilisation of *Greek* villagers *was* "a border struggle", not only because the struggle was literally played out at the border, but in order to address their movement as, in part, a battle for the signification of the border and in order to recognise their success in engendering a moment of impasse regarding who is inside, who is outside, and who straddles the borders of Europe, of the state and of capital.

Border Economies

The battle for the crossroads at *Thermopylae* was the symbolic fruition of a battle for rights of access outside of the village, seven kilometres down the Klio mountainside, at the desolate promontory of the Korakas lighthouse. By 2015, the Aegean route had been in use for decades and Korakas was a well-trodden landing site; the lighthouse, intended as a warning to sailors of jagged reefs and colliding currents, signalled a safe harbour for unknowing migrant skippers, many of whom had never seen the sea before their crossing. But that spring, what had previously been an occasional arrival of a boat per month – a fleeting curiosity noted in passing on the dirt track leading to the village – exploded, seemingly overnight, to an average of ten boats, or 600 people per day. With state infrastructures virtually non-existent, and international volunteers confined to the more tourist-friendly towns further north, migrants' first encounters on touching land at Korakas was with the villagers who had gathered there to watch the frail dinghies make their perilous crossing and to receive their passengers, usually with kindness.

The purely recreational dimension of scouting boats at Korakas was soon supplemented, however, with burgeoning business interests; scouts realised that besides excitement, those boats brought engines, and money. Word of this secret bounty spread like wildfire through the village, and ever more men made their way down the dirt trail to verify it. Korakas was thus quickly transformed into the centre of commercial and social life for unemployed, day-labouring or retired village men. It provided distraction, new micro-economies for the idle entrepreneur, a new rhythm to the day and, ultimately, community. Together, the men would spend days perched on the lighthouse's stone pedestal, scouting the horizon for

boats and listening for their engines, placing bets on their brand and size based on their rumble. The rubber dinghies' engine and fuel were of primary worth; wooden planks from the bottom of the boat were also prized, but less sellable. A large wooden boat would be stripped and harvested to its skeleton – for engine oil and scrap metal if nothing else. After hundreds of arrivals, the engine market was saturated, but engines were picked up anyway and hoarded; the micro-economy expanded to buy-backs brokered with Turkish smugglers and was supplemented with sales of food and water – often skimmed from aid packages dropped off by humanitarian workers.

In efforts that straddled imperatives to hospitality and increased productive efficiency, new infrastructure was channelled into the rugged terrain of Korakas, as the villagers terraced the cliff-face into make-shift steps, flattened and expanded the goat trails to the village, and re-directed irrigation pipes for a reliable water supply. Perhaps the most significant enterprise was a cooperative "taxi mafia" developed to shuttle migrants up the seven kilometres of dirt track to the village crossroads and, for a higher price, on to the registration camp of the main city of the island, Mytilene. With nothing but goat trails connecting the lighthouse to the village, locals' pick-up trucks and knowledge of the landscape proved the only means capable of navigating the terrain. Competition among drivers for transport gigs demanded regulation of the drivers, and shifts were counted and distributed among them, but prices often remained at the discretion of the drivers themselves.

Lesvos's stagnation as a result of increasing rural emigration and the abandonment of agriculture and husbandry had accelerated and intensified since 2010. Spates of austerity cuts and policies of structural adjustment had slashed pensions and farming subsidies, leaving almost all villagers un- or under-employed. The border village's seeming abandonment by the state in its capacity as both overseer and provider, however, proved fortuitous when, at the outbreak of the "refugee crisis", the absence of the state allowed for the development of a liminal legal space both for the autonomous self-management of the employment crisis and for the logistical crisis at the border, where the state had yet to build any infrastructure to cater for arriving people.

While lacking the oversight of a single entity, these local assemblages were nevertheless logistical operations, reliant on the social coordination of services and sales to be delivered to consumers: the migrants whose arrivals drove more expansive and intensive operations of supply and attracted local buyers of engines and scrap. In instances in which engines were returned to Turkish smugglers, these small-scale

operations were integrated into the much more expansive logistical chain of the smuggling cartel.

The migrants arriving on the shores of Lesvos thus brought to life many of the island's villages, opening a new world of entrepreneurship and a form of *labour* that austerity had previously foreclosed – an opportunity and a resource through which the social ties of the village and their knowledge of an otherwise intractable terrain were creatively deployed. The nature of these economies – their positioning with regards to the state and their development at a moment of "crisis" characterised by financial collapse, warrants some analysis. In their self-presentation, the locals conflated the two (the state as the executor of an increasingly exploitative capitalism) and so opposed them both. The organisation of these economies rested on recognising an *opportunity* not only in the migrants, but in the condition of dispossession itself – in the villagers' position at the borders of territory and at the margins of capitalism. The social constitution of these informal economies thus amounted to a form of autonomous political practice appropriating the state of figurative and literal marginality, making the border productive.

While these projects clearly aspired to a relative autonomy from the state and formal economies, as Verónica Gago (2017) highlights, such moments of resistance inhabit an ambivalent position in relation to those structures they claim to oppose, or *in spite of* which they claim to flourish. On the one hand, these informal economies do emerge as a means of prospering in spaces of dispossession by suturing together heterogeneous spheres of production, social cooperation, value and networks as creative responses to the retreat or collapse of the state and its sanctioned forms of labour. On the other hand, it is the very logic of calculation that drives the collective social enterprise, its (partial) reliance on an exploitative economy (centred around the migrant) and the stakes set on a certain form of freedom *from* the state that suggest something of the paradoxical entrenchment of neoliberal rationality at the level of the social subject. Where Gago extends this to an analysis of the ways in which such structures of the "informal" with respect to state and capital are partially re-configured as extractive frontiers of interest to capital, tapped into and subsumed by its formal logics through processes of financialisation, here I take a longer route: locating a mediating step in the articulation of these "baroque economies" (see Gago 2017) with the moral and political economies of the humanitarian industry.

Expanding the humanitarian supply chain

In the summer of 2015, global media had located Lesvos at its epicentre. Images of refugees reaching the island's shores, uncared-for, left to negotiate the perils of the sea and the 60-kilometre trek to the island registration camp, proliferated, adding fuel to international opprobrium at the moral shortcomings of the Greek state. This was the terrain on which micro-economies flourished. By the early autumn of 2015, however, humanitarianism had hit the ground. [See endnote 2]

While, in the summer of 2015, thousands had arrived on the shores of Europe with no state or humanitarian infrastructures in place to receive them, the early autumn witnessed a dramatic inversion: aid workers and volunteers arrived in their thousands, only to find that the numbers of arriving boats had plummeted. NGOs competed for contracts with state and European entities or with humanitarian giants such as the UNHCR and partner organisations which formed links across logistical nodes between the islands and the mainland and northward, through the Balkan route, securing a chain of transfer for people bound for Germany.

Even as these connections were established, their operations relied on the initial securing of migrant groups at their point of entry, leading to a fierce battle for the appropriation of turfs: strategic positions of the coastline where a steady income of boats was guaranteed. Meanwhile, local and international businesses competed to be subcontracted as service and material providers by big NGOs. The competitive scramble served on the island to dispel much of the moral legitimacy the humanitarian sector had accrued precisely by the force of its presumed contrast with capitalist interest, revealing the subjugation of the field to market principles both through the logics of competition underlying the humanitarian apparatus and through its articulation of the not-for-profit with the corporate, engendering the humanitarian field as an only-recently tapped market for competing private companies.[2] [See endnote 3]

By late summer, big NGOs had secured monopolies over the more scenic and accessible stretches of coastline, driving smaller competitors in the humanitarian sector to search for novel untapped literal "frontiers" for their operations: a point of access to refugees. In their search, they found Korakas, and rushed to re-direct supplies of aid, communications and personnel to nail their flag to the lighthouse. Unable to extend their supply chains across the jagged landscape surrounding the

[2] Weiss, *Humanitarian Business*, p. 42.

lighthouse itself, they concentrated their assets at the village crossroads: *Thermopylae.*

Insofar as the battle for appropriation and the claim to sovereignty played out between locals and NGO rested on competing claims to land made value-rich by its constant replenishment of refugees, it can be viewed as a competition for rights of *extraction*. To suggest, as the analogy compels, that refugees were "resources" is accurate, but insufficient, for it fails to account for the ways in which the refugee's vexed relation to moral and economic value and value *systems* recalibrates the political economic space that surrounds her and varies depending on her placement in different spheres of circulation.[3]

As already mentioned, with respect to the informal village economies, the refugee inhabited perhaps the clearest position in the value chain: consumer. But with respect to the humanitarian enterprise, her position is complicated by the cleavage of moral and economic value systems that "baroqueify" the humanitarian economy, challenging objective measurement. In spite of the ways in which humanitarian entities may be subjugated to market logic, operating in a "humanitarian marketplace" and including myriad private enterprises in their logistical chain, each producing value, they themselves remain "not for profit" – re-investing only in themselves. And yet insofar as they require for their very existence a constant replenishment (and increase) of revenue, they are subject to the same logics of accumulation and expansion that drive capital. Processes of expansion, in turn, rely on the ability to valorise donations in such a way as to demonstrate increasing demand for further donations: simply, the more "beneficiaries" you aid (valorisation), the more you establish legitimacy of your humanitarian supply chain brand, demonstrate demand and secure further supply. The scramble for securing subjects of aid is, on the one hand, the effort to secure this realisation, such that the beneficiary of aid might be considered equivalent to the consumer. On the other hand, unlike the consumer, the beneficiary herself does not pay for goods/services and has very little choice in the matter of what goods/services she benefits from. A further complication ensues from considering her position with regard to the circuits of supply mentioned earlier.

It has been a common rhetorical trope in the recent "refugee crisis" to speak of the "commodification of the refugee" – typically denoting a broader view of the refugee as "objectified" by the humanitarian rubric of moral value. To examine the notion in its literal sense is a crude

[3] As already specified above, the term "refugee" here refers to signifier (an image/figure) of moral and economic value in the humanitarian economy.

endeavour, and yet, in its cleavage of moral and economic value, the humanitarian economy does produce the refugee as something approximating *exchange* value. After all, the political economy of humanitarian aid relies for its existence on the circulation of moral value. Donors represent moral sentiment in donations; deployment of those donations in the aid of refugees does not exhaust but increase demand for them, such that ability to demonstrate aid to X number of refugees can be speculated to incite Y amount in donations. In this circuit, the refugee arriving on the shores of Lesvos has no value (in keeping with the extractive analogy) until she becomes the beneficiary of aid (the refugee is picked up by aid *workers*, "aided", put into a tent, photographed; the photograph is sent to donors in Northern Europe), and is *valorised*; the image (here, again, it is wise to specify that it is the image, rather than the person of the refugee that is commodified) and its affective value is delivered to the donor where it is realised (for it is the *donor* here who is consumer); the approving donor then re-invests. This schema of the refugee's exchange value is a crude simplification, but my framing of the humanitarian value chain is an attempt to locate the ways in which even those value systems that claim to have nothing to do with capitalism do in fact rely for their very existence on an imperative to enter the logic of capital, and the ways in which that necessary reckoning produces its own effects at the level of the subject.

As far as these effects have a bearing on the figure of the refugee, we have examined the ways in which the refugee manifests as consumer (the realisation of value) in the spheres of the local informal economies and as (exchange) value in the political economy of humanitarianism as such. There is a further sense in which the refugee figures as the precondition for the production of value: that is her appearance as human capital, as labour bound for the prospects of work in Northern Europe. Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned the bidirectional logic of the humanitarian logistical chain: at once engaged in funnelling aid in the form of material and labour (of aid workers) to the European periphery, it also plays a crucial role in the direction of migrants *from* the periphery to the European core (most often Germany). These lines of labour supply partially overlap with the autonomy of migration (the humanitarian nodes along the Balkan route), but most often seek to *tame* it, through an alignment between humanitarianism and national labour regimes in turn under pressure, in 2015, to meet demands for skilled labour. As Altenried et al. (2018) point out, the flexibilisation of migrant labour has seen the breakdown of a long-standing distinction between asylum and labour migration, and the increasing recruitment of refugee labour – a cleavage also present in the use of humanitarian rhetoric as interpellation of labour

in the midst of its shortage (the lyrical humanitarian waxings of German politicians at the height of the summer of migration). The degree of humanitarian imbrication in such recruitment schemes would only become evident after the March 2016 EU-Turkey deal, when the logistical management of migration hot-spots (intended to fragment the migrants' personhood into ever more specific categorisation processes through the asylum procedure) came more and more under the purview of the UNHCR and after humanitarian agencies became increasingly solicited by recruitment actors for their knowledge of relevant skill sets, statistics and contacts among the refugee population. Relocation schemes in effect after the EU-Turkey deal thus saw European peripheral migration hubs transformed both into buffer zones and into spaces for the extraction of labour, in which migrant human capital was sorted and a line of supply with the Northern states generated.

These processes might not have been completely obvious to the villagers gathered at the crossroads of *Thermopylae.* But neither were they arcane. In reading the NGO as an extension of German imperialism, they had identified something of the logistical circuit splicing through Europe: a chain of labour supply reliant on the claim to rights of extraction – except that the resources elicited were neither raw material nor local labour, but the migrant labour of which Greece – and Lesvos in particular – had been made the reserve. To be sure, the total identification of the humanitarian organisation with, in the final analysis, Angela Merkel, onto whom stood projected the entire power of finance that seemed to hold Greece – and Europe – in its grip, was a crude overshot. And yet the villagers had glimpsed something about the incorporation and subjugation of the humanitarian enterprise into the logics of capital and of the length of the logistical chain through which this logic was expressed; it was not mere fantasy that led the villagers to believe that their interruption of the humanitarian supply chain at Korakas might cause ripple effects in Germany.

But the identification of the logistical chain circuiting through Korakas as a form of imperialism – a claim to sovereignty issuing from elsewhere – spoke also to a finer analysis of capitalism's production of space in ways not reducible to national territory (and so to processes of colonisation in cruder form). Recognition of the border point (Korakas) as a site of resource extraction, inscribed with value both by the village economy but also crucially by the logistical operations of humanitarianism, serves to produce it as a space integrated into a different totalising framework than that of the nation-state, in ways I will mention in conclusion.

If the logistical operations of humanitarianism (entered into the logics of capital) took on extractivist dimensions at the point of conflict

(the extractive frontier), their operations became contingent on reckoning with the forms of social and economic life that preceded it – forms which, in their own way, had inhabited spaces of marginality (if not exteriority) with respect to state and capital. Where, in traditional notions of extractivism, this reckoning has frequently taken the form of appropriation of marginal spaces through displacement, in the dynamics of expanded notions of extraction, capital locates the extractive frontier in the *forms of life* operating on those margins (on its presumed outside) – recognising them as untapped sources of value.[4]

The battle between locals and NGOs subsided after weeks of deadlock: circling around Korakas, the NGOs dealt a fatal blow to the local economies' systems of value. And yet for all their expertise, funds and personnel, the NGO could not reckon with the rugged terrain of Korakas where the locals' know-how and, crucially, their pick-up trucks alone could navigate, making their transport cartel the only efficient logistical chain for shuttling newly arrived people from the beaches to the municipality's tarmac roads. Having encountered a point of friction, the NGOs' own logistical chain stalled briefly, and re-calibrated to make that friction *productive,* transforming the micro-economies from obstacles to conduits of value.

Without offering the locals formal employment, the NGO bargained a standard sum per ride from the corrugated cliffs of the lighthouse to the village crossroads. The effect of the arrangements was to leave the socially cooperative structures of the cartel and the forms of knowledge and practices it sutured together intact (rather than transforming them according to the logistical templates of the NGO itself), while simultaneously tapping into them as sources of value (extraction in its expanded sense) integrating them into the humanitarian logistical chain (re-configuring the processes of value creation as a result).

To the degree to which, as Gago, quoting Deleuze, explains, "The dynamic axiomatic of capital, highlights precisely this tension between flexibility and versatility of capture and exploitation by capital and, at the same time, the necessity of distinguishing operations through which that machine of capture subsumes social relations from inventions that also resist and overflow the diagram of capture/exploitation",[5] the moment of capture by capital does not arrest the dialectic; new (and old) inventions will continue to emerge to defy the totalising aspirations of capture. Over the course of the following year, the drivers would routinely organise

[4] Gago and Mezzadra, "A Critique", p. 578.
[5] Gago quoting Deleuze in *Neoliberalism from Below*, p. 11.

wildcat strikes, demanding higher payment at key moments of crisis – at the landing, for instance, of a large boat at a particularly intractable point of the coastline familiar only to them, reviving the logistical struggle. Until the smuggler trail shifted lanes and the steady income of migrants at Korakas dried up, they always won.

Conclusion: Spatialising Capital in Europe

On a concluding note, I return to the symbolic practices through which the locals first recognised a continuity between humanitarian organisations and their imagined sender. After all, in the same month in which the German Chancellor had appeared in the guise of the tight-fisted Swabian matron disciplining a belligerent debt colony into submission in her treatment of the Syriza government, she had followed, in a matter of days, to re-invent herself as the Old World's statue of liberty beckoning the "refugee" as the poster child of a liberal "Europe with a friendly face" in the midst of a domestic labour shortage.

Equally puzzling, in the wake of the fall of Syriza, would have been the contradiction between, on the one hand, the unflinching denial and suppression of a political movement that carried the promise of an "other" social vision *in* Europe, and on the other hand the mediatised embrace of a population movement typically perceived as carrying the hallmarks of the Other *to* Europe. In many ways, the "refugee" crisis had done much to salvage the "crisis" in and of Europe: the affront to the viability of the European project wrought by the tensions at its Southern periphery. As panic disseminated regarding the disintegration of Europe – its inability to remain *whole* – the refugee had proffered an opportunity to reaffirm European identity by refreshing its commitment to humanitarian principles, and by its foregrounding of the border as a signifying practice of last resort: European territory.

In staging their struggle under the banner of *Thermopylae*, the villagers of Klio unsettled those signifying practices. For if the legend of *Thermopylae* ranks among the foundation myths of Europe, such that to hold sovereignty over the straits is not only to lay claim to a crucial geopolitical nexus (the gateways of Europe), but also to hold power *over* the signifying frameworks through which the idea of Europe is crafted, then the villagers' recognition of an interior coloniser in the Northern European personnel who descended on Lesvos in the guise of brothers-in-arms, would-be fellow Europeans bound in the common manning of the historic border of *Thermopylae*, issued a clear message that the frontlines

are no longer where they used to be; that the Persians no longer hail from the East.

On an immediate level, their claim to sovereignty echoed rhetoric popularised through Syriza's mounting of a populist front of antagonism around *national* sovereignty. The processes of European border control and management were read as a spatialisation – an incursion into territory (by *European* powers) – of the processes of remote control rendered by fiscal dependency. They viewed migration and austerity as parallel and allied phenomena in the disarticulation of the border zone from the body of Europe: a disaggregation of sovereignty and territory that produced the periphery as the ante-chamber to Europe.

But my attempt at entering the logics of this one border assemblage has partly been an attempt to complicate that spatialisation of capital. Rather, by entering into "the messiness" of the local – where Europe, nation and capital "hit the ground" at their purported borders – I have sought to trace the ways in which the fragmentation of European political and economic space (the would-be "disintegration of Europe") made so palpably manifest in 2015 by the twin phenomena of austerity and migration, breeds much finer sovereign logics than those implied by the crude binaries of the *national* dimensions of the sovereign and the colonial and the disintegration of Europe by capital. After all, in vouchsafing their right to *local* sovereignty, the villagers had staged a protest against the *state* as well, re-configuring our scales of analysis. If the totalising logics of capital no longer rely on homogenisation but on the successful articulation of the heterogeneities produced by it (or, at times, against it), then this chapter has begun to suggest an allied reading of the European Union, by which a seeming disintegration (the loss of the *whole*), a breakdown into increasingly diversified zones (much finer than the nation-state) can simultaneously be read as a reformulation of integration into a totality. Specifically, by attempting to trace that parallelism in one particular *space* of encounter at the borders of Europe, nation and capital, and the multiple logistical threads that worked to bind it with actors seemingly claiming disassociation from nation and capital, this chapter has sought to read that moment of disintegration as a form of recalibration by capital that translates into a re-integration of Europe through the productive articulation of its own fragments.

Endnotes

1. The charge of "interior colonisation" deserves contextualising in the recent history of the left-wing Syriza government's tenure. At the beginning of 2015, the party's election had shaken Europe with its resolve to rescue Greek political sovereignty from the country's creditors and nurturing ambitions for a socialist alternative to austerity. The first six months of the government's tenure had bred belligerent heroes (Tsipras; Varoufakis) strutting, leather-clad and manly, into EU headquarters in Brussels to announce their revolt against its bureaucrats. Tantalising their voting base with the promise of a definitive rupture with austerity, Syriza's rhetorical power lay in its appeal to quintessentially Greek pride, honour and, crucially, *sovereignty*, seeking legitimacy by recourse to soft nationalism. In that period (and its aftermath), political commentary hazarded analogies between Greece and the post-colonial state or the "debt colony". The analogy is a powerful one, edifying the trending demand for national sovereignty as the primary requisite of a (radical) alternative politics to austerity by association with post-colonial struggle for self-determination, thus rehabilitating a familiar language and paradigm of emancipatory politics, establishing a platform for international solidarity from the former colonies and placating anxieties that the Left's uncharacteristically zealous deployment of nationalist rhetoric had led it into the terrain of the far Right. It was from this rubric that the villagers drew their battle cries. While I follow their analogy here, it is critical here to recognise its limitations – among which the fact that its analytical stress on oppressor and oppressed *nation* reinforces the national as the familiar horizon of politics, thus eschewing the critical demand for an analytics of power that supersedes it, and that understands such intra-state relations as molecular interactions whose overall aim is the transformation of the supra-national entity of the Union (even as this transformation may take as its ultimate goal the establishment of a single nation as hegemon).

By the summer of 2015, the fantasy of national sovereignty had withered on the vine following the Syriza government's "capitulation" to its creditors. The defeat signalled a final affirmation of the loss of effective sovereignty to creditor nations together with the mass privatisation and sale of state land, services and industry to Northern European buyers. For the villagers of Klio, many of whom were Syriza voters, it functioned as further affirmation of the moral bankruptcy of the state and its attendant disregard for the *laos* or the *ethnos* (the people). In this instance, for as long as the Syriza government had held the front against its European creditors, its capacity as embodying the *ethnos* had been recognised: they were Spartans. When the government capitulated, yielding to its creditors and thus betraying the *ethnos*, they had lost the mantle of representation. In the process, the locals became to the government as the government once was to the EU: belligerent.

2. Alongside established organisations came an army of humanitarianism's own informal sector: MONGOs (My Own NGO) or "voluntourists" – independent philanthropically-inclined citizens of the global north for whom the moral rewards of humanitarianism had been democratised by the unusual unfolding of a humanitarian crisis *in* Europe – and in a place that was accessible, safe and beautiful. Often a subject of ridicule or suspicion, MONGOs have typically received short-shrift from professional humanitarians, who understand them as "a vast countermovement run by people who are convinced they can get things sorted out in a crisis zone more effectively, quickly and cheaply than the 'Real' aid workers with – to MONGO eyes at least – self-serving motives and cumbrous bureaucracies" (Polman, 50). MONGOs thus dogmatically seek a recovery of the purisms of philanthropy as an unmediated fulfilment of the Dunantist "humane desire to lighten a little the torments of all these poor wretches," unfettered by the checks of government and business bureaucracy which are the concerns of professional humanitarian organisations (Polman, 53).

But MONGOs bear analytic value for their own baroqueness, their informal hybridity, their spirit of entrepreneurship of "humanitarian aid [which] exists in a free market where anyone who chooses to can set up a stall" (Polman, 51). MONGOs proliferate instantaneously, as a creative response to the latest crisis – requiring only a tourist visa, a title, a logo, a private bank account or crowdfunding page and a website in which support in the form of volunteer labour (from retired social workers to dental hygienists) or material goods from antibiotics to G-strings which, according to ICRC "clog up airfields and logistical hubs", can be elicited from global citizenry. What pools in is money, supplies and labour in a motley assemblage that is often anonymous, unchecked and free of the reins of home and host state regulation. MONGO's vertiginous hybridity may, too, be understood as a form of "popular economy": emerging out of the absence of state and financial regulation, they articulate themselves as social complexes that knit together variegated assets, skill sets, logics, rationalities, motivations and ways of life, claiming to advance a political imaginary of care.

3. Perhaps the most interesting development has been that of knowledge-sharing across humanitarian and private business sectors, especially as regards supply chain management. In a report on humanitarian logistics, Rolando Tomasini and Luk Van Wassenhove, former logistical theorists for the United Nations, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and FUNDESUMA, urge a cross-pollination of tactics in the elaboration of speed and the triple-A of logistics: agility, adaptability and alignment. That an integration of humanitarianism and business should involve the increasing adoption of market tactics by humanitarian entities comes as no surprise, given the above discussion; what is more interesting is the way in which humanitarianism itself has provided critical know-how to big business supply chain efficiency, "present[ing] attractive learning opportunities for private sector partners" (14).

If, as Rossiter (2012) suggests, "contingency is the nightmare of logistics", then humanitarian operations offer a handsome prospect for knowledge mining because their mandate is, precisely, to deal with contingency. Humanitarian

organisations prioritise speed (the would-be reduction of the circulatory time of commodities) in an immediate response to what cannot be predicted with certainty in ways comparable to the remit of just-in-time delivery. Indeed, Tomasini and Wassenhove are to the point: "Agility is the ability to quickly respond to short-term changes in demand or supply to handle external disruptions. This is the very nature of humanitarian supply chains where the time cycles are very short, new and unprecedented demands occur frequently, and external factors place physical, if not political or financial, constraints on the system" – constraints that may include the intervention of the belligerence of labour, here added by implication to the rubric of humanitarian catastrophe (7-8).

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CHAPTER FIVE

CULTURAL MEMORY AND SOCIAL HABILITATION: THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

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Today, the Asia Minor Catastrophe is a central site of the Greek national memory, in the core of which is the refugee drama. The undertone of the relevant narrative moves between trauma and triumph and highlights on the one hand the violence of refugees' expulsion from their homelands and on the other their successful integration into Greek society and their contribution to its modernisation and economic growth. It was not always that way, though. On the contrary, this articulation of memory is rather recent, as it only appeared in the 1970s and 1980s, and was mostly shaped by the second and third generation of Asia Minor refugees. Although the significance of the military defeat in Asia Minor in 1922 was immediately acknowledged, as it marked the end of the "Great Idea" that formed the Greek foreign and interior policies since the nineteenth century, at the time its memory was rather contested; it sparked political debates and antagonisms which developed on the basis of apportioning responsibility for the defeat – either the royalists or the Venizelists (supporters of Eleutherios Venizelos).[1] The question of who was to blame for the defeat haunted Greece in the interwar years, and in many ways defined the

[1] The "Great Idea" appeared as a term in 1844, during the debate at the National Assembly between Ioannis Kolettis and King Otto concerning the civil rights of Greeks who lived in the Greek state and those from regions that remained within the Ottoman Empire (autochthones and eterochthones). From that point onwards, it was elaborated by intellectuals such as Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos and Spyridon Zampelios and became a political programme that defined the domestic and foreign policy of the Greek state, basically articulated around the political culture of "Romantic Hellenism" and the idea that Greekness does not coincide with the limits of the Greek state (Kitromilides 1998).

political and social scene during that period. At the same time, the need to redefine Hellenism in the new context, given the state's geographical "shrinkage" and demographical alteration, sparked cultural fermentations. Romanticism, which had shaped national identity during the nineteenth century, needed to be renegotiated, so as to accommodate the new situation into a new narrative upon which the national narrative would be based. Interwar national ideology was articulated around the concept of "Greekness", which, though, in itself became a field of debate, between conceptualisations that focussed on the one hand on the modern Greek particularity within the context of European Hellenism, and on the other on politicised conceptions of Greekness that resettled Greekness within European modernity (Papari, 2018). In this context, refugees were either absent or appeared as a problem. The discussion over refugees during the interwar period was articulated mainly around the need for accommodation and integration. The term most commonly used was "the refugee problem" or "the refugee issue". Neither their experience nor their agency was relevant to the broader discussion in that time. On the contrary, the "eastern" cultural traits that many of them carried appeared as alien and alarming, especially in environments that underlined the European affinities of Greek culture. The main argument that I will elaborate in this chapter is that during the interwar period intellectuals with Asia Minor origins undertook the task of shaping a narrative regarding the "refugee past and memory", that allowed the inclusion of refugees in the national imaginary and therefore to the discussions over Greekness. Moreover, I will argue that in many ways the narrative formed was a selective one, that essentialised refugees by highlighted aspects of the refugee past that would facilitate inclusion, whereas other aspects were actively downgraded, resulting in partial representation of the refugee experience and in complementary narratives that emerged in the decades that followed.

1922 and the formation of a national memory

Refugee movements were inseparable from the experience of the First World War. About thirteen million refugees walked all over Europe and the Near East, as a result of the war. It was not only the violence of the enemy that uprooted these population. Mainly, and especially in the regions of the historical empires that collapsed, expulsions took place against communities that had been living in the area for centuries and that now, in the new context of nation states, were perceived as aliens. The size of the problem was such that the League of Nations had to address the problem of the millions of stateless persons who had no place in the new

world order. Seen through this lens, refugees in the Balkans and between the two sides of the Aegean Sea were part of the reorganisation of the world that followed the Great War, or in other words part of a transnational story that superseded the political antagonisms between the two interested states of Greece and the Ottoman empire – and between Greece and Bulgaria.

Transnational as it was, though, both the defeat and the population uprooting and exchange quickly acquired a national character. On the one hand, the First World War was historiographically constructed as a national event all over Europe. On the other, especially as far as Greece was concerned, the political burden of the National Schism in 1915-1917 regarding the country's participation in the war continued to haunt the interwar period, after the defeat in the Greek-Turkish War of 1919-1922. The question of "who was to blame" dictated the routes of historiographical production at the time. Refugees became the tangible reminder of the defeat and were therefore caught amidst the political rivalry. Moreover, the fact that their status quickly became regularised through international agreements and they were granted citizenship rights (with the intervention of the League of Nations) facilitated the emergence of a perception focussing solely on the national aspects of the event. Although socially they were still treated with caution and the politics of marginalisation were often practiced, politically they were considered Greeks. Therefore, the main problem was their social and economic inclusion.

From the beginning, the state wanted the refugees to be accommodated with the aim of making the refugees self-supporting after a short period of time, rather than being dependent on state support. Thus, it implemented a series of reforms, some of which matured over a long time, such as agrarian reform and the decision to expropriate land and redistribute it, in order to give land to the refugees. At the same time, the state used the refugees to demographically boost the so-called New Lands (the lands acquired through the Balkan Wars of 1912-13), especially Macedonia and Thrace, dealing thus with the territorial aspirations of neighbouring countries. The other package of reforms launched, due to the presence of refugees, was that in employment, social security and public health – reforms imposed by the demographic change caused by refugees in general, and in the work landscape in particular, changes that eventually transformed Greek society as a whole. Maintaining a balance was important during this process. The integration of the refugees should not fuel anti-refugee sentiment which already existed within Greek society, due partly to locating refugees in local houses in the first months after

their arrival. It was not uncommon for the masses of refugees to evoke feelings of distrust and competition, especially among the working classes of the native population, as the overabundance of the labour force posed a real risk of falling wages. Thus, the need to preserve social peace is often present in the rationale of the reforms – sometimes even explicitly.

The shaping of refugee collective memory

Even if the state showed interest in refugee integration, they were still not included in the national imaginary. The process of integration seemed successful from above and from the outside, from the perception of the state. If we look at the experience of the refugees themselves, things appear very different. These people were uprooted, they lost their community-based world, and they blamed state policies for that. Besides, the refugees' experience was not just one of uprooting. The transition from displacement to rehabilitation was not automatic – and often the transition process proved to be just as traumatic. Many suffered having to move from place to place when they were living in Asia Minor, and then had to do the same again in Greece. And all of this was happening against a background of violence, the aversion of the locals, diseases and loss of their homelands, their sense of belonging, their property and, in many cases, their loved ones. It is no coincidence that the term "refugee sorrow" prevailed: sorrow refers not only to what is left behind, but also to their suffering in the new situation. After all, if the settlement had been so successful, the refugees would not have turned to the Left, nor would they have filled the ranks of the National Liberation Front during the Nazi Occupation. The refugee identity was forged not only from the experience of uprooting, but also from what it meant to be a refugee in Greece – and the corresponding practices they developed to cope.

Refugees had to work their own way towards making space for themselves in the national narrative. Generally, refugees, apart from the obvious everyday difficulties that they faced and their struggle to settle in their new homeland, were concerned about what would become of their cultural identity. Although international preconditions of the population exchange and the status of refugeehood ensured their inclusion in the citizenry, their concern was whether integration would mean assimilation or whether it would be possible to be integrated with their cultural identity being acknowledged (Toundas, 1928). The state of refugeehood had imposed on them an identity that homogenised them in the eyes of the state and the natives and overlooked cultural differences that existed among them. Refugeehood was transformed into a metonymy for a

cultural identity, the content of which remained in question, to be formed or defined.

The Ottoman subjects who became Asia Minor refugees in Greece in the early twentieth century were far from constituting a homogenous group with a unified cultural identity (Anagnostopoulou, 1997). While in communities that had gone through modernisation and where the work of nation-building had been undertaken mainly through community schools and associations, national identity had become an element of their collective identification, others were defined mainly by their religious faith and their locality. Linguistic differences, social antagonisms and different attitudes towards modernisation and nationalism, along with the different experience of uprooting, characterised the diversity among the newcomers, who were perceived as an undifferentiated entity mostly because of their refugee status (Anagnostopoulou, 1997). Nevertheless, this variety and fluidity of identities was not "translatable" in the Greek national imaginary. To become so, it needed to be formed in a way that would resonate within the existing structure of national belonging. Therefore, the cultural memory of refugeehood was articulated side by side with the collective and cultural memory of Anatolian Greeks, silencing and gradually forgetting elements of the cultural identity that did not fit the national frame. The task was undertaken by Greeks of Anatolian origin who had settled in Greece earlier for educational, social, and economical reasons and had acquired social status; they undertook the task of facilitating the politics of integration. They were intellectuals, university professors, politicians and other prominent members who functioned as "bridges", translating one culture into the other (Zanou, 2013). They served as mediators of memory, because they realised that if refugees were to be included in the national imaginary, carrying with them a distinctive cultural identity, which would be perceived as Greek, this identity should be translatable, and thus recognisable, in the discourse of the national narrative. The Anatolian Greek identity thus followed the syntax of the national canon placed in relation to the glory of Greek antiquity, proving its Greekness through the cultivation of Christianity in the Byzantine Empire as well as protecting and preserving its Greekness under the Ottoman Empire (Salvanou, 2018).

The sense of both history and geography of the Greek Anatolian communities were therefore appropriated to facilitate this. Anatolia was reimagined according to the historic geography of the region, with emphasis in the ancient Greek past. By doing so, the fragmentation of the space that was articulated according to communities and urban centres, was replaced by broader geographical entities (Pontos, Kappadokia, Ionia,

Aiolia, Pisidia etcetera) that referred either to the region's ancient Greek historic geography or to its Byzantine ecclesiastical one, to which the national imaginary could relate. Most importantly, these regional templates came loaded with historical connotations and were *a priori* part of the national narrative. In other words, by adopting the use of Greek names, it was no longer the Greekness of the space or its population that needed to be proven, but rather the specific content and character of this Greekness. Language, everyday life, tradition, folk tales, all became indicators of Greekness and part of a newly formed "refugee culture", which on the one hand was region-specific while on the other it formed the constellation of the Asia Minor Greek culture which gradually was integrated to the national one (Salvanou 2018).

Memories left out of the narrative

Integration was a long process that was carried out by combining historical narratives and historical practices and addressed at the same time towards the locals and the refugees. As far as the refugees were concerned, ethno-topic refugee associations created spaces of belonging, which contributed to the shaping of imagined communities that combined the regionally defined cultural identity of the Anatolian homelands with the national one. As far as the locals were concerned, it systematically cultivated the ideology of the lost homelands. In other words, it meticulously developed a representation of the Greek Anatolian communities as a national one, stressing how they had participated in the milestones of the national narrative. In this way, on the one hand the Greekness of the refugees was shielded, while on the other the loss of the territories was systematically represented as one that concerned the nation rather than only the refugees. In many ways, the pattern of working towards inclusion was known and tested. In the case of regions that were added to the state after the Balkan Wars, their Greekness was underlined by adapting the regional memory to the national one and at the same time by making space in the national memory to include it (Liakos 1994: 171-199). By doing so, integration was justified and social cohesion was facilitated. For refugees the process was the same, except that instead of working towards the nation-building in the regions, it worked towards nationalising "lost" ones and including them in the national imaginary.

As much as the memory narrative that intellectuals and the associations worked towards facilitated politics of integration, it was selective and defined by a very much top-down approach. It did not include, for example, Turkophone Christian populations, the cases of

communities that had not gone through modernisation (and even when it did, it romanticised it), the urban popular music culture, the antagonisms between and within communities, the refugees' strong connections with the Communist Party or their participation in the Resistance on the side of left-wing EAM-ELAS resistance group (Salvanou 2018: 195-206). It was a rather polished and carefully calculated narrative that placed the refugees at the centre of the social establishment and in what was perceived as a mainstream (and therefore acceptable) national culture. These excluded aspects, and the complexity of refugee history, would come to light later, during the post-war decades, when oral testimonies became part of the picture and brought to the fore the dynamics of integration, both through its inclusions and its exclusions.

An observation here on the politics of memory exclusion. As mentioned previously, memory politics developed by refugee intellectuals aimed at the inclusion of refugees in the national imaginary, in a way that would retain their cultural identity. But even their cultural identity was reshaped in a way that would fit the mainstream memory and identity politics of the time. With the Left being a heavily contested political and social field already since the interwar period, often connected to political persecution, exile and incarceration, affiliations of refugees with the specific political ideology were not easily displayed. Such a choice would have involved a double marginalisation. Nevertheless, this does not mean that such affiliations did not exist. On the contrary, since the 1930s, refugees started joining the Greek Communist Party in very large numbers. In the first decade after their arrival in Greece, refugees mainly supported Eleutherios Venizelos, partly because of Venizelism's rhetoric about refugees' Greekness and its support of their political inclusion and partly because there was no other political space that could accommodate them. Many anti-Venizelists had strong anti-refugee sentiments that were also translated into political choices (such as the pressure against the refugees' electoral rights), while the Communist Party on the other hand had undermined its popularity among the refugees because on the one hand it argued for the independence of Macedonia and on the other it did not acknowledge refugees' special social status. After Venizelos' and Atatürk's *rapprochement* and the signing of the agreement on friendship between Greece and Turkey (1930), refugees felt betrayed. The Communist Party, which had in the meantime revised its opinion on Macedonia and acknowledged the special social situation of refugees, became the political space to which they moved. The bonds between refugees and the Left became stronger during the period of Axis Occupation in the Second World War. During that time, refugees, who were still living in slums on

the margins of the cities, massively joined EAM/ELAS, the left-wing resistance group. The choice involved partially their subscription to socialist ideas and was partially a way to mark their dissatisfaction with the way they perceived the politics of the state and the natives towards them. This being said, choices in some cases moved in the opposite direction, especially in refugee villages of Northern Greece, where ethnic identities and local dynamics turned prior Venizelist refugees towards anti-communism (Marantzidis, 2001). Nevertheless, the main trend was for the refugees to turn towards the Left. In this framework, not only did grassroot memory of refugeehood find its place in cultural expressions of refugees, such as rembetiko songs, but also the experience of solidarity among refugees in the first phase of their settlement in Greece were recalled and recontextualised in the situation of resistance against the Occupation (Charalambidis, 2012). The subscription of the refugees to the two antagonist ideologies of the 1940s in many ways contributed to the overcoming of the old division between natives and refugees. Shared experiences formed a new space of inclusion, where refugees, without abandoning their ethnic and cultural identity, reinscribed it in the new contexts of the Left, on the one hand, or the "nationalmindfullness" on the other (although to a lesser degree). Memory politics became a new field of contestation. While the official narrative continued to exist, enjoying the symbolic power of state and institutional recognition, narratives coming from the Left began to take shape. They would become visible some years later, in the 1960s.

From collective to cultural memory

In the post war decades, perceptions and representations of the Asia Minor Catastrophe became multifaceted and relevant to broader publics. There were two main poles around which this transformation took place: the commemoration of the forty years' anniversary from 1922 and the memory work undertaken by the Centre for Asia Minor Studies. The early 1960s in Greece was a period of cultural renewal and upheaval, characterised by youth and protest movement connected to the Left. Part of this process was the bringing to the fore the notion of the "people" and their role in major historical events. In this framework, the commemoration of the forty years since the Asia Minor Catastrophe was marked by the cultivation of its cultural memory through relative literature and novels that focussed on the everyday life of the refugees before and after the war and their uprooting and on the way that historical forces and political powers disrupt the otherwise normality of everyday life (Nikolopoulou,

2007). On a larger scale, it brought into discussion the role of imperialism in the war of the early twentieth century and therefore recontextualised the events in Asia Minor: rather than being the outcome of a national strife between Greece and Turkey, as was the case until then, at least as far as the way the event was conceptualised in public history, they became the result of imperialist politics in the region.

The memory work undertaken by the Centre for Asia Minor Studies moved in the same direction. The Centre was founded in the early 1930s, beginning with a project on the music tradition of refugees from Anatolia. The main phase of its work, though, took place in the 1950s and 1960s, when it planned and carried out a programme of systematic collection of oral testimonies from the refugees, regarding their lives in their Anatolian homelands and in Greece (Papailias, 2005). In many ways, it echoed the broader turns in the way that societies of the 1960s related to their past. Initiatives in oral history, memory and history from below were part of a rising interest in subjectivity and multivocality that emerged during that period as part of the democratisation of academia, science and society. Initiatives such as the History Workshop in the United Kingdom, the bottom-up oral history movement in the United States, microhistory and the history of everyday life reflect this kind of concern about democratisation of historical practice and narrative as well as the rising of a public engagement with history and the past. The vast number of the testimonies collected formed a corpus of grassroots documentation of refugee experience, which had been missing up to that point. It therefore reshaped the way that refugees were represented in the cultural memory, giving flesh and bones to the subjectivity of refugee experience.

Trauma and national memory

The 1970s and especially the 1980s became a turning point in the shaping of the cultural memory of the Asia Minor Catastrophe. During that period, it gradually became institutionalised and transformed into a memory regime (Radstone and Hodgkin, 2003). The 1970s were marked by a boom in the founding of refugee associations. As opposed to the ones founded during the interwar period, though, which were primarily focussed on assisting with the imminent difficulties that the refugees faced in their attempt to settle in their new homelands, the associations founded in the 1970s focussed on the preservation of cultural memory and the cultivation of cultural identities in the second generation. Dance, music, cuisine, and folk art from Anatolia, in other words, everything which became known as the “Asia Minor heritage”, were some of the interests pursued by the

newly founded associations which cultivated aspects of an ethno-regionally perceived cultural identity.

The 50 years' anniversary of 1922 was dominated by refugee memory. The long-playing record *Mikra Asia* (Asia Minor) featuring musicians Apostolos Kaldara, Yiorgos Dalaras and Haris Alexiou, shaped the emotional tone of the event – a tone that was marked by, on the one hand, a nostalgic representation of the life in the Asia Minor communities and the pain of the uprooting, and on the other, by the ideology of the lost homelands – that is, the discourse that Asia Minor was a historically Greek region since antiquity that was lost to the Turks in 1922. Additionally, the journal *Economicos Tachydromos* published a special issue on the contribution of the refugees to the modernisation of the Greek economy, thus systematising a narrative that had been gradually taking form during the previous years: that the expertise of the refugees and the renewal of the working force were vital for the economic growth of the country, especially during the interwar period.[2] Also, the Centre for Asia Minor Studies organised an exhibition, presenting the outcome of the memory work project it had undertaken during the previous two decades. It was the first time that memory work undertaken did not focus only on a specific ethno-regional refugee group, but provided an overview of the refugee population and their culture, organised according to the imagined national geography. It also described the methodology of the memory work that had been undertaken (Merlie 1974). A few years later, in 1978, Nikos Koundouros' film *1922* was released, based on Ilias Venezis' book *The Number 31328*, which largely affected the shaping of the relevant cultural memory, as it shifted interest from the odysseys of the refugees in Greece, which was the main theme of the relevant films in the previous decade, to the violence and trauma of the expulsion (Papadopoulos, 2013).

Trauma was another aspect of the cultural memory of 1922 that was emerging from the 1970s onwards. The turning towards the notion of trauma and the articulation of the cultural identity around it were part of a broader transformation in historical consciousness that was taking place in the post-war years. For many years, academic history approached memory with caution: not only was memory a different mode of relating to the past, but, most importantly, it relied on emotion, undermining in this way history's precondition for objectivity. But, on the one hand, the historicisation of the Holocaust that redefined the relation between memory and history, and on the other the shift of historical consciousness towards notions of memory

[2] Οικονομικός Ταχυδρόμος, ειδικό αφιέρωμα 31: «Οι πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα: πενήντα χρόνια προσφοράς που άλλαξε τον τόπο», 1973.

in the absence of future-oriented teleological narratives that had organised historical narration since the nineteenth century, changed the picture. Trauma became the new lens through which experiences were measured. Relations to the past were redefined according to the newly emerged category of suffering (Liakos, 2011).

The turn towards the shaping of 1922 as a traumatic site of memory took place in the mid-1980s. In the climate of the turn towards memory and of the gradual emergence of identity politics, refugee associations took the main lead, taking advantage of their ability to access political figures of the time, for the politicisation of the cultural memory of Anatolian Greeks. In September 1985 a commemorative ceremony in honour of the dead in the Asia Minor Catastrophe was organised by the Federation of Refugee Associations of Greece in Athens, with the support of the government (Sjoberg, 2017). The attempt was soon overshadowed by that of the Pontian Greeks, who followed their own paths and politics of recognition. Pontian Greeks were more susceptible to social marginalisation than refugees from other regions of Anatolia, for various reasons that were connected to their cultural backgrounds, the strong form of kinship relations and political choices. Following the same course of turning towards cultural memory and reviving it in a rather folkloristic manner, Pontian associations emerged in the 1970s and 1980s and cultivated the regional refugee identity, passing it on to the new generation. But, in this case, the dynamics were a bit different. Pontian associations and intellectuals were not interested only in the preservation of memory – a task that was in any case rather abstract, as the case was one of reconstructing and revising cultural memory in the new social and cultural framework – but in a claim that they defined as "the right to memory" (Exertzoglou, 2003-2004, Exertzoglou, 2011). The Pontian Greek cultural memory was cultivated as one in danger; as opposed to the way danger was perceived in the interwar period, though, (that is, a fear that integration would mean assimilation) in the case of the Pontians the fear concerned the prospect of exclusion and marginalisation. Rather than developing as an ethno-religious cultural identity, fully integrated into the national identity and tinted by emotions of nostalgia, as was the case with the other regional identities, Pontian Greek identity was constructed around the concept of trauma and the call for justice. In the constellation of the Greek national imaginary, where each regional group carries stereotypically certain cultural characteristics, Pontians claimed for themselves the position of heroic victims and also represented themselves as having suffered most compared to other Greek Anatolian communities. It was in this context that the claim for recognition of

the Pontian Genocide,[3] which emerged in the climate of the broader debates on genocides that the Holocaust brought to the fore and as a more specific response to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide that started being debated in the mid-1960s. The Pontians' "Right to Memory", which was published as a manifesto in a daily newspaper in 1986 by Michalis Charalambidis, a prominent member of the political party PASOK, was defined as the right to remember past sufferings and genocidal politics that were implemented against the Pontians in the Ottoman Empire, and politics of marginalisation implemented against them in Greece. It was stated that only through raising awareness of the past sufferings of the people would Pontians, both the older and the younger generations, develop a collective identity that would ensure the continuation of their existence. Furthermore, these sufferings would only become "corrected" by an international recognition of the Pontian Genocide. The notion of genocide, especially after its legal recognition by parliament in 1994, drastically reshaped the national imaginary of 1922 and put the refugees in its centre (Mpaltsiotis 2013).

Conclusion: Returning to experience?

Today, the archetypical image through which the memory of 1922 is organised is the burning of Smyrna and the refugees who were struggling for their lives in its harbour. 1922 has been transformed into a chronotope, that symbolises not only what happened in the last days of August 1922, but all the violence against and uprooting of the Christian communities of Asia Minor, Thrace, Pontus and Cappadocia since 1919 (if not since 1914). It refers to the violence, the trauma, and the successful end of the story. Nevertheless, the experiences of 1922 and the refugee experience cannot be condensed into a single time-capsule, nor was the passage from the pre-war condition to that of refugeehood a matter of a few days or weeks. Thousands were uprooted and exiled well before 1922 and others wandered for months around Asia Minor until they reached a port that would lead them to Greece, many times after travelling to the Black Sea, Russia and Istanbul. Many died on the way from hunger, illness, and exhaustion. If we approach this side of 1922, there is a different story to be told. The memory of expulsion is inscribed on the bodies of the refugees, regardless of their nationality. The experience of the time when the world

[3] The "Pontian genocide" was the attempted extermination of Pontian Greeks (ethnic Greeks living in the Pontus region of north-east Anatolia) carried out by the Ottoman empire between 1914 and 1922.

was being reorganised was one that was, on the one hand, transnational and, on the other, deeply based on the human condition. And the drama was not only played between Greek and Turkish armies, Christian and Muslim population, but in a scene to which international agents (humanitarian organisations, medics, politicians, etcetera) participated as well.

This multilevelled experience is well documented in the testimonies of the refugees as well as in the memoirs of the main actors present. But, the national lens through which they were approached until then kept them in the shadow. Returning to and rereading the experience of refugeehood will reconstruct the everyday experience of expulsion, for all parties affected. What happened for example when refugees and those who would become refugees found themselves sharing the same village, after the first had arrived and the second awaited their departure? How did they configure the needs of daily life? What is the relevant memory? What is the shared experience of hunger, illness and fear, not only within ethnic communities but between them as well? How was the role of international intervention perceived by the refugees? These are only some of the aspects of the story that are not present in the cultural memory of the period, neither in Greece nor in the other national memories of the region. Nevertheless, it is a memory useful in many ways for going beyond memory regimes and reapproaching the experience of refugeehood during the interwar period. And maybe help recalibrate our gaze towards the present refugee crisis in the region.

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CULTURE EAST AND WEST

Chapter Six

The Lure of the Orient in Greek Literature and Music[1]

Gail Holst-Warhaft

The subject of the eastern and western strains in Greek character, literature, music, and language has been analysed at length; from Kazantzakis' observations about the eastern and western inheritance of modern Greeks, to Patrick Leigh Fermor's division of modern Greek culture into Romiosyni and Ellinismos, to Michael Herzfeld's analysis of "*disemia*" in the Greek character, the observations of Greek and non-Greek observers have been consistent. There is an ambivalence in the Greek character and, according to the individual, an acceptance or a rejection of one or other side of his or her inheritance. Sometimes this has led to a strong rejection of one or the other. At other times there has been an accommodation, a hybridisation that embraces the best of both sides, as we find in the rebetika songs.[2]

Kazantzakis not only saw a dichotomy between east and west in the modern Greek psyche; he thought that it was particularly and peculiarly present in his Cretan ancestry. In the introduction to his translation of Kazantzakis' *Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*, Kimon Friar summarises Kazantzakis' philosophy, in particular his idea of "the Cretan glance", which consisted of the eye of the Orient, or Dionysos who came from India or Asia Minor, and the eye of Hellenic Greece, or Apollo. He makes two distinctions between Greece and the Orient. The supreme ideal of Greece is to preserve the ego from anarchy and chaos. The ideal of the orient is to dissolve the ego into the infinite and to become one with it. Kazantzakis saw the oriental model as passive, as contrary to his hero Odysseus despite his Dionysian tendencies.

"There is nothing so contrary to the spirit and practice of Odysseus as this Oriental conception of life", he wrote. "Crete, for me ... is the

[1] This chapter was first delivered as a lecture to the Durrell Library of Corfu at the Solomos Museum, hosted by the Society of Corfiot Studies, 2 July 2022.

[2] See Holst-Warhaft 2002 for a discussion of the rebetika as hybrid music.

synthesis which I always pursue, the synthesis of Greece and the Orient ... a being that gazes on the abyss without disintegrating, but which, on the contrary, is filled with coherence, pride, and manliness by such a vision."[3]

What are we to make of Kazantzakis' dichotomy and its synthesis in his "Cretan glance"?

His philosophical ideas were a synthesis not only of west and east, of Greece and the Orient, but of the ideas of Bergson and Nietzsche, both of whom had a great influence on him. His was a thirsty mind, and he travelled the world greedily drinking from whatever source seemed interesting or valuable. He spent his life seeking for a god, and his god was as hybrid as his philosophy. Crete was a convenient metaphor for the source of his restless, questing spirit, and Minoan civilisation seemed to embody the qualities he most admired. And yet he spent most of his life abroad, and when in Greece he chose to live on Aegina rather than on Crete. Even his most famous hero, Zorbas, is not a Cretan but a Macedonian, and the instrument he plays is not the Cretan lyra but a santouri, an instrument that came to Greece from the Middle East.

Kazantzakis was not alone in his ambivalence toward the western side of his inheritance, nor was he alone in seeking a synthesis between East and West. Angelos Sikelianos saw in Orphism, the teachings of Pythagoras and the Mysteries of Eleusis, a sense of unity that had come to Greece from the East, from what he called "the venerable Asia".[4] He believed that Greek culture had arisen from an oriental background; in particular he looked to the teaching of the Vedas and the Upanishads as sources of deep wisdom.[5] In the Apollonian-Dionysian duality, like Kazantzakis, he comes down on the Dionysian side. His poems, from "The Great Homecoming" on, celebrate this communion of his own being with the rhythmic, erotic energy of Dionysian ritual.

Sikelianos' spiritual quest was not only personal – he believed that only by reviving the ancient roots of Greek wisdom as it was embodied in Delphi, could Greece recover the wisdom and strength it once possessed. The "Delphic Idea" was embodied in two festivals which he organised with his then wife Eva Palmer, in 1927 and 1930, where ancient dramas and reimagined dances were performed. The festivals were to have been followed by the establishment of a Delphic university, a project that remained

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[3] Kazantzakis, Nikos, *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel,* translated by Kimon Friar (quotation from the introduction, p. xviii).

[4] In *The Marble Threshing Floor: Studies in Modern Greek Poetry*, pp. 125-183, Philip Sherrard has written an extensive analysis of Sikelianos' philosophical and spiritual beliefs as they were reflected in his poetry.

[5] Sherrard, ibid., p. 133.

unrealised because of lack of government support. Sikelianos, like Kazantzakis, spent the rest of his creative life seeking for a metaphysical, spiritual synthesis, a god of Dionysian passion and the "eternal feminine". It is not surprising that the two were close friends.

Less attracted to the Dionysian orgiastic immersion in life that Sikelianos and Kazantzakis encouraged in their writings and more contemplative in his belief, George Seferis also looked to the east as a source of deep wisdom. Born in Smyrna/Izmir, in 1900, he was, after all, an Ottoman subject until his family moved to Greece. His view of contemporary western civilisation was dim. The contemporary inhabitants of the west seemed to him to be living like tourists and their lives were filled with boredom. His solution for the ills he saw in contemporary humanity was not to venture out into the tumult of life, but to seek the source of wisdom and relief in silence and contemplation. One of his first important poems, "The Cistern", imagines the still, dark water-tank teaching "silence in the midst of the fevered city". But in his "Mythical Story" [*Mythistorema*] Seferis does not remove himself from the travails of ancient or modern life – he travels, like his fellow Asia Minor refugees, sharing their privations, but aware that there is something beyond the estrangement of modern life in Greece where…

> Our country is closed in, all mountains with a roof of low sky day and night.
> We have no rivers, we have no wells, we have no springs,
> only a few cisterns, and those empty, echoing and we pay them homage.
> A stagnant, hollow sound, like our loneliness like our love, like our bodies.
> It seems strange to us that once we were able to build our houses, our cottages and our sheep-folds.
> And our marriages, the fresh garlands and fingers have become inexplicable puzzles for our souls.
> How were our children born? How did they grow strong?[6]

Nothing, in Seferis, is as good as it once was. The lost world of Asia Minor and his constant feeling of being a refugee, a person unjustly removed from his place of origin, is part of Seferis' and, more broadly, modernity's destruction of the "πλούσια τάξη" – the rich order of life that comes from generations of occupying the same land, harvesting the same crops and vines, where ancient olive trees are marked by the "ρυτίδες των γονιών μας".

One could add a number of other important poets and prose-writers

[6] G. Seferis, *Collected Poems 1924-1955*, p. 27.

to this group of Greek artists who recognised the hybrid nature of their culture and celebrated the oriental side as a necessary and fundamental part of their inheritance, but there were also writers and thinkers who rejected it. As I and others have commented elsewhere,[7] the most overt expression of the attraction and repulsion of Greeks toward their oriental side is probably Kostis Palamas' poem "The Orient". Like Kazantzakis, Palamas focusses on song as the locus of the oriental and female side of the Greek character:

> From Ioannina, Smyrna, Constantinople, long drawn-out eastern songs, pitiful,
> how my soul is dragged along with you!
> It is poured from your music and flies on your wings.[8]

Superficially, the poem is a damning depiction of the Orient, but where exactly does the poet stand? His spirit is dragged along with these slow, sad, oriental songs, with the seductive oriental mother who appears to corrupt as she intoxicates, and he seems unable or unwilling to free himself from her spell. It is a precise articulation of the cluster of qualities the poet and, presumably, many of his contemporaries associated with the east. The songs may drag him along but they don't drag him down. Rather *anatoli* is poured from the music and he moves on its wings. The verb that Palamas uses, *sernetai*, literally means dragged, but it is also the verb that is nominalised to form the name of the most common of Greek dances, the *syrtos.* The dragging or pulling is not exactly negative … The poet's soul is pulled into the rhythm of the music, joining the dance circle until it takes wing…

> Πώς η ψυχή μου σέρνεται μαζί σας
> Είναι χυμένη από τη μουσική σας
> Και πάει με τα δικά σας τα φτερά.

If we look for the lure of the orient in Greek prose, we find a less ambiguous, more positive nostalgia, of which the prototype is undoubtedly Ilias Venezis' *Aeolian Land* [Αιολική γη]. Venezis' hymn of praise is to the land of western Anatolia itself, a landscape with which he identifies so deeply that it speaks to him.

As Palamas and Kazantzakis make clear, nostalgia for the lost homelands of Asia Minor was expressed as much in music as in poetry. In the decades following the Smyrna catastrophe, *cafés aman* proliferated in Athens. In these musical cafés, refugees and some local Greeks gathered to

[7] See Holst-Warhaft, 2019.
[8] Palamas, Kostis, *Poems*, 2017.

listen to the music popular in Smyrna, Constantinople and other Greek centres, music they would have heard in similar venues in the pre-war decades. Among the popular genres performed in the *cafés aman* were *amanedes*, the songs that Kazantzakis had singled out as expressing the soulful melancholy of the orient, the maternal side of the Greek character. The fact that Kazantzakis heard such songs in his travels in the Peloponnese suggests that their popularity extended beyond the refugee audiences to a broader Greek public. What exactly were they? And why did they become emblematic not only of the music performed in the *cafés aman* but of the oriental strain in the Greek character? And why did Kemal Atatürk ban them in Turkey (if indeed it was an official ban)?

A jewel of the genre, and to my mind the greatest female voice of the Asia Minor style, was Smyrna-born Rita Abadzi singing "Galata Manes" in 1932, accompanied by the equally great violinist Dimitris Semsis, born in Stromnitsa, near Thessaloniki and known as Salonikios. The words (with despairing interjections in Turkish and Greek) are:

> Forget me completely, alas, alas. Don't hope anymore and say I never met you – that I never set eyes on you.

At the end of the song, as was customary in the *café aman,* the violinist salutes the artistry of Abadzi – "Enjoy your voice, Rita!'' he says, and she replies, "And I'll enjoy your improvisations!"

I find these exchanges fascinating. They establish an atmosphere of mutual admiration similar to that when a jazz musician performs a solo and is acknowledged by his or her fellow musicians. And unlike the music, the casual snatch of conversation transports you directly to the 1932 recording studio. Semsis, who spoke Slavomacedonian as a child, travelled to Constantinople, where he was a favourite of the Sultan, before moving back to Greece and settling in Thessaloniki. He was immediately successful and able to support his family by performing. He moved to Athens where he became recording director for HMV and Columbia. He played all sorts of music, including Persian and Turkish music, but his two favourite *café aman* singers were Rita Abadzi and Roza Eskenazi.

The subject of the banning of *amanedes* and Greek attitude to them has been addressed by a number of scholars.[9] A debate over the *amanes* was aired in the newspaper *Ta Athinaika Nea* (The Athens News) in 1934. The rumour that Kemal Atatürk had banned *amanedes*, as part of a European and modernisation campaign, made some Greek commentators assert that they could not afford to be more oriental than the Turks by allowing these "oriental

[9] *Inter alia* see D. Hatzipantazis, 1986; S. Gauntlett, 2008; Holst-Warhaft, 2019, 2002.

dirges" to be performed in cafés. Some musicians and musicologists defended the *amanes* as being an ancient Greek form that had come to Greece via Byzantium. Nationalist composer Manolis Kalomiris came to their defence. Others argued for a ban on *amanedes* as being depressing and demoralising.

The debate about the *amanedes* and more broadly Asia Minor music gained a new dimension when the Metaxas dictatorship banned Asia Minor music in 1937. Kounadis and Papaioannou described the ban as a "genocide" because it aimed to destroy the culture of the refugees. This is ground that has been trodden by a number of authors including myself, and I don't want to address the subject in detail, but the ban on Asia Minor music probably only helped to end what had already begun to be overtaken by the bouzouki-based rembetika of Piraeus. The Tetras Ksakousti or "Fab Four" of Markos Vamvakaris, Stratos Payioumdzis, Anestis Delias and Yorgos Batis were suddenly all the rage in late 1930s Piraeus, and soon began to be nationally successful recording stars. Two of them were refugees, two were local Greeks. Their collaboration tells us a lot about the successful absorption of Asia Minor music into a homegrown popular style. The bouzouki was not a new instrument in Greece but, in the hands of these musicians, it became *the* sound of popular music. Stratos Payioumdzis, who was a fine singer, could perform any sort of Asia Minor music, but joined the other members of the group to cater to a public demand for Markos' earthy Greek voice and lyrics. Asia Minor modes and ornamentation remained an essential part of rembetika music, but what the Piraeus hybrid achieved was a strong local flavour, with lyrics based in the working-class neighbourhoods of Piraeus and Athens. Orientalist flavour was introduced in some of the rembetika songs of Piraeus and Athens, especially in the songs by Tsitsanis and Kazantzides, but as a consciously exotic, amusing flavour, for example: "In the Baths of Constantinople" (Delias), "I'll go there to Arab Lands, Arab Girls" (Tsitsanis).

The compositions, for want of a better name, came to be called Popular Art Songs (*Entechna Laika Tragoudia*), and were not initially attracted to rembetika. Manos Hadjidakis recognised the beauty of the music of Vamvakaris and Tsitsanis, introducing it to a bourgeois audience in Athens in 1949 like some exotic and hitherto neglected animal.[10] But other intellectuals, like Kostas Tachtsis, had recognised the importance of the music to ordinary Athenians during the German Occupation. Already it was the music of the urban working classes, and it had a flavour of resistance to it that listeners responded to.[11] But musicians who had grown

[10] Tachtsis, 1949, in Holst, Δρόμος για το ρεμπέτικο (translation of Holst, 1975) with articles from the Greek press, p. 151.
[11] Holst, 1977, p. 202.

up in educated or more prosperous classes of Greece, whether on the left or right of the political spectrum, had not been raised to listen to such music. It was only when he was exiled to the island of Ikaria in 1937 that Mikis Theodorakis listened to the rembetika. He listened to a boatload of prisoners from Piraeus singing a song by loannis Papaioannou, and he asked what it was. A prisoner taught him "Captain Andreas Zeppos" and he immediately incorporated the melody into his Carnival Suite. At that time, he never thought that, a dozen years later, he would be writing neo-rembetika songs that would become the most popular music in Greece.

Theodorakis' models were the late rembetika songs of Tsitsanis and Papaioannou. Working with the brilliant bouzouki player Manolis Hiotis, and with popular singer-songwriter Grigoris Bithikotsis, he produced dozens of *"laika tragoudia*" (popular songs based on the rembetika) but he never talked about Asia Minor music, and few of his songs were in modes other than major or minor. Only in his 70th year did he decide to pay tribute to the female and oriental side of his inheritance – to Aspasia Poulaki, whose family were from Çeşme near Smyrna.

To indicate the musical result of his decision, here is what the composer wrote on the liner notes for *Gallant Little Bird*, an album that added a surprising new element to his compositions:

> The loveliest gift of my 70th year… is this album which was made with the love and talent of three friend and artists – Yannis Spathas, Vassilis Lekkas [a young singer who had sung with other well-known Greek composers] and Mihailis Ganas [a poet] … Ten years ago, following the concert tours we did together in Greece, Europe, and the United States, we presented a series of "Gallant" songs only with the orchestra. When Lekkas came close to me to in recent months to make a record, the "Roads" and the Gallant Songs came out again into the light. The excellent poet Mihailis Ganas came to join the team so as to dress the strange sounds with poetry.
>
> When we met for the first time all together at the house, I showed them the photograph of the Poulaki's [his mother's] family taken in Çeşme (Krini) in Asia Minor a few years before the [Asia Minor] Catastrophe, and I said "The record must be called *Gallant Little Bird* ... so as to show the roots of its inspiration.[12] It's true that it's very important to me, because my other musical roots, whether Cretan or popular or European, dominate my music so as to do an injustice to the maternal side which, hopefully, should be stronger. So, firstly to rectify a wrong. And, moreover, because I wouldn't want people to think that just like that, out

[12] In Greek he used a feminine ending (η) for the little bird instead of the expected neuter (ι).

> of the blue, it occurred to me to get involved with the roads [modal scales]. As for the "Gallant" – this is a rhythm, a dance of my imagination. However, I gave it a strict form based on the alternation and development between 3+2 and 8+16. So, we have a first part with 8 or 16 measures of 3/8. A second part where the 3/8 alternates with the 2/8 where measures of 3/16 are inserted, something that gives a sudden shake to the rhythm and that's why I called it Gallant, that is, for gallant lads, men who enjoy their life to the full. This rhythm, combined with the roads takes us straight to the shores of Asia Minor, where Greek culture once shone, in sweet Ionia, my mother's roots, (liner notes, my translation).

Theodorakis goes on to talk about childhood visits to his mother's family who had fled to the island of Chios and how they always talked about Çeşme, and the house and garden they could see far away across the strait. The five women of his maternal family would sit and open the trunk in which they kept the title to their former property on the mainland, after which they would all weep together, and between their laments, would sing a hymn to the Virgin.

Gallant Little Bird is remarkable in many ways. When he decided to turn, for the first time in his life, to the maternal roots of his music, Theodorakis did not look for poems that were appropriate to his music. Instead, he invited Ganas to write poems that would fit both his music and the memories he had of his maternal heritage. Ganas obliged with a series of poems that might have been written in the house where Theodorakis' grandmother and maiden aunts spent their days mourning the loss of their Asia Minor home in Çeşme:

> **Like an Orphan**
>
> The ivory buttons,
> the fans and combs,
> they left them all
> on the old dresser in Çeşme.
> And a moon just as it is
> in all the Mediterranean
> and a full moon
> in Smyrna and Pergamon
> like an orphan.
> The pomegranate and the fishing-boat
> were tied near the house
> so the moon would take them
> and they would come out at Plomari.[13]

[13] Lyrics by Mihailis Ganas (my translation). Plomari is a port on the island of Lesbos a few miles away across the sea.

Theodorakis had used modal scales before in his music – Greek liturgical and folk music both use scales not common in western music – but he had not explored the complex modal system of late Ottoman music that was the basis of much of the music played and listened to in cities like Smyrna or Aivali. He had also never considered inventing a rhythm that represented, to him, the dance rhythms of the coastal region of western Anatolia. This was a major undertaking, and the result was unique in his musical output. In his seventies, and conscious that he had focussed on his paternal Cretan heritage at the expense of his maternal Asia Minor heritage, Theodorakis set out to learn more about the music of the region and to compose an imaginative series of songs in homage to his mother's Asia Minor roots.

The *Asikiko Poulaki* could be seen as belonging to a trilogy with his *Politeia* 3 and 4, and a product of his final creative period that lasted approximately from 1990 to 2007, but the cycle is unique in many ways, not least in its rhythmic and melodic invention. Theodorakis always knew where to find the musicians and singers he needed to perform his work. He knew that the music he had written was difficult. Without the musical skills and experience of Yannis Spathas, whose orchestration and rhythmic understanding were essential to the successful performance of the songs, and of Vassilis Lekkas, a singer familiar with a wide repertoire of music, it is hard to imagine how this unusual recording could have been made. It sounds like popular music, but it is composed in no precise popular style.

Theodorakis designated the song "Look into my Eyes" as being in *asikikos* rhythm. This is clearly important to him, as the whole cycle is called *Asikiko Poulaki* or *Gallant Little Bird.* The adjective *asikikos* comes from the Turkish *aşik,* which can mean a lover or a troubadour. In Greek it has the sense of someone who knows how to enjoy life, who has a gallant, proud style. It is an Asia Minor word, not in current use in Greece. On the recording, Theodorakis gave the "gallant little bird" a grammatically incorrect ending to indicate the bird was female. In this tribute to his mother and her culture, the little bird (*poulaki*) represents Aspasia Poulaki. The "dance" rhythm he invents, however, is undanceable. So, what are we to make of this song that sounds sometimes like a *karsilamas* and yet each time you try to tap the rhythm, it catches you off the beat? It is the poet Ganas who says it best:

> Paper globe, false world,
> but the song knows where you hurt.
> Only in its rhythm is it legitimate,
> the rebelliousness I hide, and the obedience.

The song appears obedient to a familiar rhythm but gives a sudden jerk or tug where those measures of 3/16 are inserted.

The title song on the album, again in "asikikos" rhythm, is the one most directly associated with Theodorakis' mother Aspasia and the catastrophe of Smyrna:

> Fire in Smyrna and smoke in my eyes
> and by the time the sky drops some rain
> a girl in an old photograph
> will spend years weeping for everyone's dead.
> ……
> Burned houses and a spark in the heart
> but Greece, as always, far away.
> Whoever escapes the fire and the knife
> will find a mother who reminds them of a stepmother.

One might have expected this cycle of songs, with its rhythmic and melodic originality, its unusual arrangements, and its poetry about the loss of Asia Minor – a subject that touches the hearts of all Greeks – to be a great success. Instead, like Theodorakis' other song cycles of the 1980s and 1990s, it enjoyed very limited popularity. Theodorakis had to be content with the fact that he had paid tribute, finally, to his maternal inheritance (and his wife's) and enjoyed his close collaboration with two younger musicians and with a poet to do justice to his heartfelt desire to celebrate the culture of his mother. Those who were genuinely interested in his music were surprised and impressed by his new music.

The songs of *Asikiko Poulaki* and the description by Theodorakis of his maternal grandmother and aunts spending their days on Chios looking across the water at their lost home, reinforce the pain of nostalgia associated with Asia Minor in the Greek mind, this time without any suggestion of the erotic. The cities of Çeşme, Aivali, Vourla and Smyrna, so close to the Greek islands and yet unrecoverable, remained, for those who were born there, an ideal, a site of longing.

It is interesting that the lure, here, is once again female. Theodorakis pays homage to his mother's homeland and its music, but his female relatives spent their days re-living their past, gazing at a house so close they can see it, but which might as well be in the South Pacific. After a lifetime of writing music celebrating his Cretan ancestry and developing a style of composition that owed so much to western classical music, to the Byzantine music of the Orthodox Church, and to the rhythms and dances of Crete, the composer turned his gaze to the east, understanding, as if for the first time, that a complex and beautiful musical tradition existed on the shores of Asia Minor.

There are many more literary and musical examples I could add to this brief account of the cultural ambivalence and importance of the oriental in Greece. It would be a lengthy study. Perhaps I have drawn some threads together that link the musical and literary expressions. There are exceptions, of course but, generally, what I have called the lure of the orient in Greek culture is very different from its manifestations in 1975 so-called "orientalist" literature. For the Greeks, the oriental is immediate, clearly manifest in their own culture. Like Theodorakis' maiden aunts, they can almost reach out and touch it. They can sing an *amanes* and feel their souls melting with sorrow. They can smell it, feel it, hear it. It is the side of their character they enjoy most. The loss of Asia Minor did not mark the end of the oriental in Greece. It inspired hybrid music, nostalgic literature, and eventually the acceptance of their own eastern legacy.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE HUMANITY OF MEDEA

SPYROS D. ORFANOS

The modern Greek loves life and fears death, loves his homeland and is simultaneously a pathological individualist; he fawns upon his superiors like a Byzantine, and torments his inferiors like an Aga, yet he will die for his filotimo – his personal honour. He is clever and shallow, with no metaphysical anxieties, and yet, when he begins to sing, a universal grieving leaps up from his oriental bowels and breaks the crust of Greek logic; all at once the East, all darkness and mystery, rises up from deep within him.

—Nikos Kazantzakis, 1965

For three millennia, Euripides' tragic play *Medea* holds a powerful grip on our imaginations. It is part of the world's cultural heritage, transcending borders of time, language, and tragedy. In addition to playing an important role in the world of literature, Medea has played a role in other fields as well. The myth of a woman who avenges herself upon an unfaithful husband by killing her children has been of great interest in such fields as politics, law, child welfare, psychoanalysis, and feminism. Medea's monologue on the troubles of women was cited regularly at meetings of British suffragettes. As a mythical figure she has gone from lovelorn princess to helper-maiden to sorceress to foreigner to mother-murderer. We are not only captured but captivated. We are attached to the Euripides play because we are affected or moved by it. This is in addition to an array of ethical, political, and intellectual bonds we may develop for *Medea*. Euripides allows us an aesthetic experience that offers layers within layers. And we, the audience, with our own individual, group, and community dynamics are activated emotionally.

Medea was represented by the Greeks as a complex figure, fraught with conflicting desires and exhibiting an extraordinary range of behaviour. This is what personally grips me about Medea. Perhaps that is why she has had such a hold on our imaginations – her complexity. Her mutually contradictory traits are an ideal vehicle for grappling with the

problems of "self" and "other", maternal subjectivity and agency, *Eros* and violence. On the manifest level, the story of Medea is a story about maternal violence. On the latent level, the story directs our attention to the relationship between destructive individual, family, and cultural patterns that are trans-generational. Its popularity has outlasted antiquity and found expression in a variety of forms, including opera, paintings, ballet, contemporary theatre, and even pop art.

This chapter focusses on the playwright Euripides' story of *Medea*, what is perhaps the most popular version of the myth. A secondary focus will discuss *Recycling Medea*, a new version of the story by a trio of collaborating artists: Asteris Kutulas, Mikis Theodorakis, and Renato Zanelli who emphasise Greek nationality and the moral injury suffered by Medea. Mythology can sensitise us to the correct psychological or spiritual posture for moral action, in this world or the next. It is not about theology, in the modern sense, but about human experience. And like human experience, which is multidetermined and multifaceted, there is never a single, orthodox version of a myth (Armstrong, 2005).

Recall that Medea was not a Greek princess. She was from the East, far-off Colchis on the Black Sea, the northern part of the Persian empire. Thus, Medea is likely to have some connection with the Medians/Medes – the Greek name for Persians. Some classicists believe this area to be the current region of Georgia.

Medea gave up everything to help Jason grab the *Golden Fleece* and fled to Greece with him. She basically saved his life and bore him children. The children of foreign wives, however, were not regarded as legitimate Greek citizens. The myth tells us that Jason deserts her to marry a Corinthian princess. Medea is enraged and heartbroken at this betrayal. His narcissistic response is that bringing her to Greece and its civilisation, and making her name known there, is adequate compensation. In her rage, Medea plans to kill their children to avenge herself, since she knows that not having any progeny or kinship is a major blow to a proud Greek warrior, and perhaps the worst form of revenge. At one point, Medea says to Jason, "How does it feel to have my teeth on your heart?"

The Playwright

Euripides brings his unique poetic vision to the myth of Medea in part to attack injustices to women and especially to foreigners. Euripides was the "bad boy" member of the famed trio of ancient Greek tragedians; Sophocles and Aeschylus were the other two. According to the classicist Moses Hadas (1950) Euripides was a brooding man who was said to write

plays in a lonely, book-filled cave on Salamis, who won few prizes, whose mother, gossip said, was a green-grocer, and who left his city in his old age. But his aloofness was the aloofness of the artist; he knew and loved life, knew and propagated the new philosophy, the new music, and the new ethics. He embodied intellectual movements in his plays. He was an innovator in both form and content. Above all, he was a realist and a rationalist (anti-clerical) who believed that passions were "natural" and therefore right, morality a convention and therefore a shackle to be cast off (Dodds, 1951). Euripides wrote plays that were directly relevant to the lives of his audience. He had a bias against coercion and was bitter about the morally unjustified massacre of the island of Melos;[1] he was on the side of democracy, but was prosecuted for impiety. Edith Hamilton (1942) describes Euripides as the "saddest of the poets". She writes, "No poet's ear has ever been so sensitively attuned as his to the still, sad music of humanity…"[2]

Euripides was a versatile poet with only about one-fifth of his work that has come down to us – nineteen plays. He had many different voices as evident in quite different plays. While Medea may speak more significantly to modern audiences, some of his other prominent plays are *Alcestis*, *Helen*, *Children of Heracles*, *Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, *Suppliant Women*, *Ion*, *Trojan Women*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Phoenician Women*, *Bacchants*, *and Cyclops* (a satyr play). Bernard Knox (1994) writes that nearly all of Euripides' plays were written in the last twenty-five years of his life, the years of the Peloponnesian War. *Medea* was first staged at the very start of that disastrous war in the early spring of 431 BCE. This was the spring festival of the god Dionysus. The Athenians looked forward to the festival eagerly, for it marked the end of a tense winter. It was the last spring of peace, of the Golden Age of Athens, the Periclean age. The work of the poet was becoming prophetic. The keenness of the disruptive, violent, subversive vision of his version of

[1] During the Peloponnesian War (416 B.C.E.) between Athens and Sparta, the Aegean island of Melos was neutral. Nevertheless, the Athenians besieged the island and executed the men of Melos and enslaved the women and children. In a 2017 conversation I had with composer/activist Mikis Theodorakis, he took great pains to explain that while the ancient Athenians were extraordinary creators and humanitarians, they also had a dark side. He explained that they lacked humility (e.g., gloating about being the "School of Hellas") and even murdered hundreds of citizens of Melos to demonstrate their power. According to the Athenian generals, "The strong actually do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."

[2] E. Hamilton, *The Greek Way*, pp.271-272.

reality cut him off from fellow citizens. He is, Knox tells us, "the poet of the crackup".

Self/Other

In her 1989 book *Inventing the Barbarian*, Edith Hall argued that Athenian tragedy was the crucible for many of the constructs of east-ness that are still in currency today, such as despotism, material extravagance, cruelty and disregard for life. While Athens won battles at Salamis and in the Persian Wars, it was ancient Athenian propaganda that claimed that the West was saved from Eastern tyranny, dissolution and terror. Historically, the word "barbarian" meant a person who was not Greek. Over time, it evolved into meaning a vile, uncultured and uncivilised person. The Chinese applied it contemptuously to foreigners.

Geographically, what we think about when thinking about the "East" is territory spanning Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East, while when we consider the "West" we typically consider Europe and North America. Besides geography there are other dimensions and variations to consider such as history, culture, and their resulting value systems. It is relatively easy to reduce discussions about East/West/Greece into essentialising narratives. Any kind of reductionistic or dichotomising thinking is dangerous. Yet, sometimes stereotypic perceptions do contain kernels of truth.

According to the classicist Sarah Iles Johnson (1975), value systems of the East and the West in modern scholarship are about the "self" and the "other." For example:

> Herodotus' ascription to the Egyptians of personal and social habits that are inversions of what he understands to be the norm (i.e., what occurred in his own country): other societies cut their hair to show mourning, but Egyptians allow their hair to grow; everywhere else weavers work the weft upward, but Egyptian weavers work it downward; and so on. Ascribing behavior that is the opposite of that within one's own society can sometimes be used to censure the other culture or persons and their behavior. Thus, the Cyclopes in *Odyssey* 9 are described as holding no counsels, having no laws, practicing no agriculture, and possessing no knowledge of wine. In other words, Homer takes some pains to portray them as being completely unacquainted with customs that define civilization for the Greeks, and thus as being "other" in all respects. Cumulatively, Homer's portrayal can be understood to further censure cannibalism, the antisocial, abnormal behavior of the Cyclopes par excellence, on which the *Odyssey* 9 focuses, When the self is opposed to other, and particularly when the other is meant to be censured, there

> usually are no "in-betweens." Such absolute divisions can have a reassuring effect, both because they impose firm rules and boundaries upon the world and because they imply that other is safely and permanently separated from self. The whole system can have a strong normative value, for describing what is unacceptable or atypical and assigning it to the other, one implicitly describes the acceptable or typical and demands it from anyone who wishes to belong to the group marked self. Thus, the dichotomizing of self and other serves as an important means both for organizing the world and enforcing behavioral desiderata.[3]

From a different and compelling vantage point, the discourse of psychoanalysis is highly focussed on the relations between self and other as one of the most important features of our humanity. Being a self with others means a constant dialectic between attachment and self-definition, between connection and differentiation, a continual negotiation between one's wishes and will and the wishes and will of others, between one's own subjective reality and the consensual reality of others with whom one lives (Mitchell, 1988). In the case of Medea, she does seem to be consumed by the other (Jason). She is the victim of Jason, and yet manages to become the victimizer. Her revenge is frightening but it also possesses agency, the personality's capacity to bring about desired results in human interactions with others. Medea does not simply exist in a Greek/barbarian dichotomy, but one has the uneasy feeling that, overall, some very old historical attitudes and realities are being symbolised. Through the Medea character, which contains multitudes, Euripides was not emphasising the horror of infanticide. He was making a moral point about the shame this foreigner from the East was experiencing in the West.

Mothers

Euripides wrote and produced his *Medea* play in 431 BCE for an increasingly xenophobic and racist Athenian audience. Medea was the foreigner within Greek society. When she first arrived in Greece, she dressed like many other Greek women, but by the end she had changed to oriental costume. She had moved away from the Greek world and aligned herself with the foreign, the other, the barbarian one. She was the paradigmatic outsider (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1997). This fact is often lost on modern audiences. Say the name "Medea" and most think of infanticide. Back in the fifth century, Euripides argued that she was driven to madness by

[3] S. I. Johnston, "Introduction" to Clauss and Johnston (eds.), *Medea*, pp. 7-8.

discrimination and humiliation. He did not approve of Medea's behaviour or think she should escape punishment. He condemns the conventional attitudes which make conduct on the part of a passionate woman inevitable.

In ancient Greece, a woman was a maiden, a bride, and then only after childbirth a mature woman. Motherhood allowed women to enter into the community and participate in religious ceremonies. Established as a mother in her own household, a woman gained new economic and emotional rights, and acquired power that could determine the fate of nations. As a mother, a woman could cease to be an object of exchange. Yet, only by becoming a mother could a woman's destiny be fulfilled. Motherhood ascertained her engagement in the *polis* (the city state), and insured access to something other than motherhood itself.

The fact that women on the Greek stage also had the ability to destroy the *polis* bears witness to the power that mothers could wield over the fate of nations. Remember that Clytemnestra, around whose death the royal household rebuilds itself, failed to destroy the *polis*; Medea murders her children by Jason, as well as Jason's new princess bride, and thus succeeds in wiping out any future progeny of Corinth. Infanticide thus becomes a political act as well as a personal act of revenge.

Recycling Medea

Besides the frequent productions of Euripides' play on stages throughout the word in all languages including ancient Greek, the story has inspired numerous new versions, including Franz Grillparzer's dramatic trilogy *The Golden Fleece* (1819-21), Luigi Cherubini's opera *Medea* (1797), Martha Graham's dance drama *Cave of the Heart* (1946), Christa Wolf's novel *Medea* (1998), and films by Pier Paolo Pasolini (1969), Jules Dassin (1978) and Lars von Trier (1988). In 1984, the Japanese director Yukio Ningawa put on one of most impressive cross-cultural productions of the play with a memorable scene by actor Mikijira Hira playing Medea. Our heroine renounces her love of Jason by endlessly pulling a red ribbon out of her mouth (Smethurst, 2002). Often these modern versions of the myth show considerable sympathy for Medea. One such sympathetic version is the film *Recycling Medea* (2014) by Asteris Kutulas.

Passion, sexual betrayal, conflict, revenge, and infanticide are boiler plate themes for opera. The eminent Greek composer and political activist Mikis Theodorakis premiered his opera *Medea* in 1991 at Teatro Arriaga in Bilbao, Spain. Theodorakis (1925-2021) emphasised the humanity of the myth, particularly with the themes of passion, dignity and loss. The opera focusses on the universality of human suffering by exploring

both Medea's and Jason's pain. This theme of suffering is related to Theodorakis' own personal experience as an activist and torture survivor, the first time in the second World War during the German occupation, and the second during the military junta, 1967-1974, (Orfanos, 1997, 1999). Marianne McDonald (1997) writes that Theodorakis saw killings on both sides of the Greek Civil War and understood human suffering, and his opera is a commemoration of this suffering. Theodorakis' real-life experiences of political exile, forced migration, and state terror link to the myth of Medea – an exile in her own right. The last aria of the opera is, in my estimation, one of the most beautiful ever composed. In an earlier 1969 iteration as a song, Theodorakis had called it "The Oracle".

When the Italian choreographer Renato Zanella came across Theodorakis' *Medea*, he was so inspired by the opera that he decided to base his 2011 ballet choreography *Medea's Choice* on it.[4] Theodorakis' *Medea* is choreographed as an emotionally charged modern ballet by Zanella – and in 2013 Asteris Kutulas, a Romanian/East German Greek and frequent manager for the composer, was inspired to create a filmed collage entitled *Recycling Medea: Not an Opera Ballet Film*.[5] As part documentary, the film features images and interviews with Theodorakis. He has become a character in the documentary (Bick, 2020). Thus, there is a connection with the composer and a concomitant political layer with Medea's political exile. Both *Recycling Medea* and Theodorakis' *Medea* emphasise the universality of human suffering, and show the audience what political exile does to someone and to sympathise with the exiled.

Thus, we have a composer, a choreographer, and a filmmaker collaborating with vocalists and dancers to give the viewer an aesthetic and moral experience of the highest order. This is what great art can do for us. It doesn't help us forget; it helps us remember to empathise with the other.

> *Recycling Medea* is a multi-layered, multifaceted and multi-interpretable art project…The main visual layer of the film consists of a recording of the 2011 ballet *Medea's Choice*... Scenes from the ballet are interspersed with recordings of rehearsals and interviews with the choreographer… Zanella is an individual bound up with in the complicated chain of

[4] The allusion of the ballet's title to William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice* is intentional.

[5] A short selection of scenes from the film:
http://wp.nyu.edu/artsampscience-nyu_pd_blog/2020/06/30/recycling-medea-spyros-d-orfanos/
I am grateful to Asteris Kutulas for permission to use portions of *Recycling Medea*.

> receptions, which also includes Euripides, Kutulas, and Theodorakis… The uniqueness of the approach of *Recycling Medea*, however, lies in the addition of two layers that seem far removed from the myth of Medea.[6]

The first layer is that the film shows footage of the violent demonstrations in Athens that took place in response to the anti-austerity measures the Greek government was forced to implement. Amid the riots in Athens with rebelling, hooded teenagers hurling stones at advancing police, the elderly Theodorakis emerges from a crowd of protesters, wearing a gas mask; the mask of Attic tragedy has become a gas mask. There is a powerful allegory at work here. Medea murders her children, while Greece murders her youth, whose future the country is destroying. The experience of the composer in the resistance during the second World War and the junta connects the current situation with past situation in which society has killed or damaged its children. History repeats itself.

The second new layer, similar in message to the first, also seems out of place with the myth of Medea. It involves scenes of a young girl wearing a white dress and a bird's nest, standing by a lake. She is referred to as "The Lost One". She reads from her diary entries which we later discover are fragments from the diary of Anne Frank. Theodorakis' 1982 *adagio* dedicated to "Children killed in war" features a song with lyrics of his own in memory of Anne Frank. With allusions to the second World War, we are once again reminded of the phenomenon of history repeating itself.

While Euripides asserts Medea's gender and ethnicity, Kutulas modifies this theme by placing the focus on nationality, specifically Greek nationality. The ancient play is used as a metaphor for Greece's and Europe's current tragedy, namely the financial crisis triggered by the 2008 US subprime crisis. The private context of a mother killing her own children is transferred to the political context of Greece killing its youth.

> The high art forms of tragedy, ballet and opera contrast sharply with the riots to show what becomes of the cradle of Western civilization: like Medea, Greece is outcast, ostracized from the society that once praised them. These parallels between Medea and Greece stress that both were forced to react against these external circumstances in the worst possible way: by killing their offspring and thus ending their future.[7]

Kutulas explains, "Ever since Euripides, the Medea material has been interpreted hundreds of times in music and literature, but we are the first to

[6] S. Bick, "Recycling Medea", pp. 22-24.
[7] S. Bick, "Recycling Medea", p. 32.

put the victims, the children and adolescent, centre stage." These victims take the shape of "The Lost One" and the rebelling protesters. They are given a voice to express their yearning for freedom, since "both are at war with their own society".[8]

Recycling Medea is a passionate and poetic cinematic essay. While not released in the United States, it has had worldwide distribution and in 2014 it won the Cinema for Peace Most Valuable Documentary Film Award at the Berlin International Film Festival. In the striking visual collage, the exquisite prima ballerina Maria Kousouni portrays Medea. She manages to amaze the audience with her sublime movements and the reach of her limbs. Her movements are immensely more expressive than the libretto. They represent a Medea we pity and fear – a woman and mother who is more than vengeful: she is tender, frightened, loving, heartbroken, mad. The music and the dance combine to both reassure and haunt my dreams. The contradictions in mood are stunning. Mother and society have betrayed the children. They have killed their future, and perhaps ours. This is moral injury of the first order with its components of betrayal of what's right, by someone who holds legitimate authority (e.g., in the military – a leader), and in a high stakes situation (Shay, 2014).

The reworked version of Euripides' *Medea* by Kutulas, Theodorakis, and Zanella, is not that far removed from the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States, or Greta Thunberg's global climate activism or the Taliban's wrath against young Afghan women, or Iran's morality police killing, jailing, and beating children, adolescents and young adults who are protesting against clerical fascism in the streets of Tehran. It's clear that since the fifth century BCE, the myth of Medea keeps on holding up a mirror to our individual selves, our societies, our vulnerabilities and our human condition. Whatever your idea that Greeks are unworthy or worthy descendants of illustrious ancestors, or not really descendants at all, one has to acknowledge that Euripides left quite a legacy. The humanity of his legacy allows other creators to enrich their repertoires and grip us with their aesthetics sensibilities.

[8] Ibid., p. 33.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

A TOUCH OF SPICE: TASSOS BOULMETIS IN CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD PINE

Personal background

It's well known that the origins of *A Touch of Spice* are personal – that your family background contributed to the themes of the film. Would you please tell us something about your family's history and how it influenced the conception of the film?

The origins of my family are from the island of Andros in the Cyclades. My great-grandfather moved from Andros to Constantinople, where my grandfather was born, and later my father and myself. In 1964, because of the political turbulence between Greece and Turkey regarding the Cyprus issue, the Turkish government expelled all Greeks who were living in Constantinople. So, my family and myself, in August 1964, moved to Greece, as refugees, and we started a new life in Athens. Being a seven-year-old boy, this displacement, for me, was a big trauma. It took me 30 years to return to Constantinople. During that time, of course, we would meet with our relatives and family friends from Constantinople, meeting almost every Sunday, and sharing memories about the past. When I was 37 years old, during a professional crisis, I decided to revisit my birth city, and this comeback was apocalyptic. It was the journey of my life. During this three-day trip, I discovered so many missing elements from my childhood, and it was on this journey that I thought about the film and the title (the Greek title) of the film.

A Touch of Spice – the title

The title in Greek is *Πολίτικη Κουζίνα / Politiki Kouzina* – which can be translated as "City Kitchen" but the intention is to identify *the* "*polis*" – Constantinople – as the *tópos* of the "kitchen". Throughout the film, the

English subtitles refer to "Istanbul", when the dialogue mentions "Constantinople".

Does the ambiguity of Constantinople/Istanbul increase the complexity of the film?

Was the English title chosen in order to avoid this ambiguity?

(I am asking because the viewer who has no knowledge of Greek-Turkish history may be puzzled by the disconnection between the Greek title and the English one. And because to the non-Greek the title can be translated several different ways.)

Actually yes, the Greek title makes more sense to the Greek audience only. I thought about the ambiguity it carries; of course it was intended, because it reflects the idea that the cuisine of Pólis at the same time includes political connotations, because it's being made by people who were, or are about to be, displaced. It is a strictly "political" cuisine. Depending where you put the accent in the word POLITIKI, the word takes a different meaning. If you put the accent in "KI" of the word "POLITIKI", then the meaning becomes "political cuisine"; however, if you put the accent on "LI" the meaning becomes the cuisine of Pólis, of the City. Even now, people who come from Constantinople, they refer to this city as The Pólis, "The City", and not as "Istanbul". Of course, most non-Greek-speaking people are ignorant about this term (the name of Istanbul as Constantinople), which of course has its origins in Constantine the Great, the founder of the city, back in 330 AD.

To tell you the truth, I am not very happy with the English title, I found it very mellow and sweetish, but now it is too late. We spent a lot of brain-storming time to find a similar title to the Greek one, but it was impossible.

A Touch of Spice – the script

Many parts of the script relate to historical events but the context makes a wider appeal to the idea of displacement. I would like to know your thinking on several aspects of the script. Perhaps you could comment on the excerpts I have chosen?

The "reorientation of identity": referring to Pappous/Grandpa's friends, exiles from Constantinople: "Their origins set them apart – both historically and biologically … who they are, what their origins are, and where they are going…"

Well, this reorientation is of course a dramatic element in order to emphasise that people who come from Constantinople, a.k.a Istanbul, have a tendency, always, to return to their past life, to the city that they mourn and they remember. Of course it's a funny or rather bitter-sweet dramatic symbolic device to express this nostalgia. At the end, my hero, Fanis, is also re-orienting himself, which symbolises that finally he became one of them, like his grandfather, a genuine Constantinopolitan. This idea came to me because, in every gathering of my family with friends and relatives from Constaninople, they would discuss continuously about their past, the good times they had then. There is also a line in the Hammam where the grandfather says: "When you move to a new place to live you must talk about your new city, not about the city that you left behind. This is the kind of person I am…" And of course this is a progressive thinking, because what he meant was: in order to move with your life you should not confront your past with nostalgia, but you have to adapt to the new conditions. This is painful, of course, and this might be the reason for him not moving along with the rest of his family.

(This "reorientation" is shown graphically towards the end of the film when Fanis himself is in Constantinople, outside his grandfather's old shop, and finds it difficult to give directions to some passers-by.)

When Fanis and his parents arrive in Greece, there is a profound reflection: "The Turks sent us away as 'Greeks', while the Greeks received us as 'Turks'." This was a common experience also of the refugees from Anatolia in 1922. **It isn't only a question of geographical origins, is it?** The film is full of references to the differences between the "kitchen" [cuisine] of Constantinople and the "kitchen" of Greece, which sets them apart. Young Fanis gets into trouble in school because he thinks "Kolokotronis" is a verb – the humorous idea that he can conjugate "Kolokotronis" supports the pathos of his unhappiness in school.

Can you please speak about this conception of ethnic Greeks as being somehow "not Greek enough"?

By using the term "ethnic Greeks", I suppose you mean Greeks of the diaspora. Of course, there are many references in the film between the way of life of the native Greeks and the Greeks of the diaspora, especially the Greeks of Constantinople. It is true that when we came from Constantinople, we had a different accent from the native Greeks, whom I call HELLADITES, (Greeks from Hellas, «Ελλάδα»), for me not an "ironic" term, referring to the narrow point of view of this group in relation to the

cosmopolitanism that Greeks of the diaspora had. When we came from Turkey, and we were established in the neighbourhood in a suburb of northern Athens, the first difference that I realised was my accent which made my new friends laugh. Also, I remember this memory in a bitter-sweet feeling, the first day of classes in the elementary school, when the teacher came in, all my fellow students, started shouting: "Madam, madam, this kid is a Turk." You understand of course by that time, for some Greeks even today, the word Turk was not a "friendly and kind word" as the word "Greek" was not a kind word for many fanatic Turks. The Kolokotronis idea came to me as a flash just the night before the shoot and I found it a great humoristic device, to comment on the problems raised by the difference of accents in a certain language, it was a linguistic joke, and I am happy it worked.

And can you also comment on this observation: "Greece was more beautiful in our minds, more beautiful than what we found when we came" – which seems to be the obverse/flipside of the way Anatolian Greeks were received in Greece.

The idea behind this line is the fact that when a Greek lives abroad, he has a strange nostalgic feeling of Greekness which does not reflect the reality of life in contemporary Greece. Regarding my experience on this, I think that the issue has political connotations, also. The Greeks of Istanbul were not very well-accepted by the official Greek institutions. There were state officials who believed that many newcomers were Turkish "spies" and were treated rudely and aggressively. Not the common Greek people, though. In the neighborhood where we were settled, although we were seen as foreign bodies, we were warmly welcomed and became members of the little community immediately.

A Touch of Spice – the chronology

You refer specifically to the years 1955 (the September pogrom against the Greeks); 1964 (the expulsion period when the Turks deported 15,000 Greeks (mainly male), who took with them their family members – a total of 45,000 people displaced (which is when Fanis' family is expelled from Turkey in the film); 1967 (the advent of the Junta); 1974 (the Turkish invasion of Cyprus).

Also, when Fanis' father is interviewed by the military in 1967 there is a heavy emphasis on the need for "heroes". You also address this issue in the 2016 film "Mythopathy", which again focusses on a young man's difficulties

in what appears to be a dysfunctional world (also the military junta) – the fascination with location, the telling of stories… This seems to provoke the viewer's memory of your statement "Our cuisine is tinged with politics" (which I will ask you about later).

Assuming that these are dates in your own immediate consciousness, is there also a "memory" of the first major event in Greek-Turkish relations, the "Anatolian Catastrophe" of 1922? At one point we are told that Grandpa's X-rays show "an old wound from 1922" (and Uncle Aimilios says, "Every time there was a crisis with the Turks, I received an X-ray") – is this a deliberate metaphor on your part?

Absolutely. The Greek-Turkish conflict, if we see it in terms of a "film production", the "screen-writing" process started in 1908, with the regime of the Neo-Turks, who were considered of course "progressive intellectuals" from the Turkish point of view, but they were very catastrophic from the point of view of other minorities, especially Armenians, Jews, and Greeks. It was at that time that this new "progressive elite" of educated Turks suggested and decided that the Ottoman empire should get rid of all minorities who lived in Istanbul. That was, as I say, that they "wrote the script" of the future of the minorities. And the "production" of this film started just at the beginning of the First World War, with the genocide of Armenians and then with the displacement of the Greeks of Ionia, in Asia Minor, a land inhabited by a Greek-speaking population from the very ancient years. So, the dates Uncle Aimilios is referring to are the dates when major offensive actions were taken by the Turkish regime, against the Greek minority.

Just to remind you of a few: in 1932, the cancelling of twenty occupations, (certain occupations performed mainly by Greeks) were banned and prohibited, the displacement of the "Twenty ages" where all Greeks from twenty-years-old to forty-years-old were displaced to perform heavy work on the frontiers of Russia, and of course the Varlik, the amazing and unbearable tax imposed on Greeks and Armenians and Jews, where these citizens had to pay 1000 times their income in taxations. If these sanctions had been imposed by any contemporary regime, they would be considered a crime against humanity!

Cuisine, Memory and Identity

Grandpa gives Fanis an idea about the use of spice in the *kouzina* which you very skillfully connect with Fanis' growing interest in astronomy: the idea that what you see may not be there, and what is there may not be seen. I particularly enjoy the cryptic statement: "Always talk about the things that others can't see. People like hearing stories of things they can't see."

Does the "Gastronomy/astronomy" parallel extend to the wider areas of identity and memory?

Yes, I think it is very well put. Actually, what the grandfather does, because he knows that very soon he will be separated from his grandson, he wants him to be continuously in touch with the two most essential elements that we can find in every single spot on planet Earth: stars and spices. Wherever one finds himself in the planet, he has a visual access to the universe, to the stars, and at the same time has access to spices which can be found in every corner on earth. So, what the grandfather Vassilis does, is to educate his grandson, to be continuously in direct contact with his teaching, with these lessons of life, that he gives him at such a tender age. After this education, Fanis will be always in touch with his grandfather's mentoring themes. By the way just for trivia reasons, I would like to confess that if I had decided to follow physics as a profession, I would have become an astrophysicist. It was my favourite subject during my studies in the physics department of Athens University.

Also, at one point we are told "With our cuisine, you always feel that something is missing – not from the food, but from those sitting around you".

This leads to the very explicit statement: "Our cuisine is tinged with politics. It's made by people who left their dinner unfinished somewhere else".

Grandpa's absence explains the "something is missing" – Fanis spends his childhood and young adulthood waiting for Grandpa's appearance at the table. But the people who *are* at the table have left something (not only Grandpa) behind.

The non-arrival of Pappous/Grandpa could be taken as a metaphor – that we wait for something to come to us from the east (*ek Anatolia fos*) that will never happen – that something has been irretrievably left behind.

Yes, actually this metaphor is very legitimate. At the same time, in contradiction to this metaphor, I recall in one of the last scenes in the train station where the family returns to Ankara, that is also a metaphor, commenting that Turkish society inevitably would "look" to the East, meaning backwards, and the only moment of hope is when the little girl, Saimes' daughter, stops and looks towards Fanis, toward the West. This gaze of the little young Turk is a drop of hope for the future of a younger generation of Turks, that finally they would bring Turkey closer to the West. I'm not quite sure if at the end, it was a legitimate thought, though. At least at the time of writing this…

Finally, to come back to your own family connections with Anatolia: do you feel any *direct* affinity with Anatolian writers whose work reflects the experience of exile: for example, George Seferis, Ilias Venezis, Elie Papadimitriou, Dido Sotiriou (born in Aidini, which features in your film!)?

Oh my goodness. I would never dare to compare myself with these giants of literature, all of them displaced. This is a very heavy load for me, this comparison. All these writers you mention are my favourite writers and idols, the most favourite being Seferis. I would never consider that my work, my humble films, would be considered of equal magnitude of the work of these storytellers.

Is there any question I have not asked, which you would like to answer?

Regarding the Aidini scene, sometimes a filmmaker has to hide some information from the broader audience, and pass some clues to those who are historically "initiated". As an example, in the whorehouse scene, the lady who runs the house is also from Anatolia, from Aidini. When she pays Fanis, because he sang Christmas carols, she gives him a very generous tip, mentioning that "…every time I see boy scouts, I tip them generously, because it reminds me my brother, whom when I saw him for the last time, he was dressed as a boy scout." Well, very few people in the audience know a major historical event, especially older people, that the first victims of the Smyrna catastrophe were the boy scouts of Aidini.

THE BALKANS AND THE LEVANT: TWO FICTIONS AND THREE CITIES

Chapter Nine

"The Howl" from *To the Lake*

Kapka Kassabova

The road to Pelagonia ran close to the ghostly Via Egnatia: from the apple town of Resen through the brooding massifs of Pelister. At the Gjavato Pass on the mountains' saddle, a small detour onto the abandoned old road where the Via Egnatia had passed took me to a symbolic water fountain. I'd read about it: a drinking fountain that naturally bifurcates. Some of the water flows east towards the Aegean and the rest flows west, towards the Adriatic, but it was hard to appreciate the natural part of the phenomenon, since the fountain had been cemented into two separate spouts. Like Janus twins, they faced opposite ways.

Gjavato Pass had linked the Via Egnatia with the Epirus road to the south, and was marked on maps of the Graeco-Roman world as *finis Macedoniae et Epiri*, the end boundary of Macedonia and Epirus. This is where the Illyrian and Macedonian lands began to overlap with the Thracian, to the east. The 'Jerusalem itinerary' brought the armies of the various crusades through this pass, and the multilingual army of Samuil during the decades of war with Byzantium. Nearby were the remains of the *castrum romanum*, or Roman camp, that guarded Gjavato. Even the Apostle Paul had allegedly walked this road on his proselytising journey, carrying the tools of his leather trade on muleback (and in his heart, a deep, irrational fear of women, one suspects).

I filled my bottle from the fountain and drove on, made uneasy by the spirit of dereliction that haunted the potholed road lined with plastic rubbish, and eventually bumped my way along a surviving cobblestoned road that retraced the original Via Egnatia. It linked a series of villages that looked as if they had been sacked by brigands. An oppressive pall hung over these once prosperous settlements with a millennial past and no present. Greenery engulfed the houses. Dogs with tumours hanging from their bellies lay in the street.

An old woman with herbs in a bag sat inside a broken bus stop where no buses passed, and cheerfully told me that she'd walked from

Gjavato village five kilometres away to meet up with a friend but he hadn't come. Despite having no teeth, she wore lipstick and a nice dress. I was about to offer her a lift along the remaining cobbles of the ancient Via to her village, when three unshaven men in tracksuits got out of an old Zastava, lit cigarettes, then drove into the forest. Losing my nerve and with it my goodwill, I left the old woman and the cancerous dogs, turned round and re-joined the motorway.

The Gjavato Pass is gateway to the Pelagonian plains. The warm wind blew the car along, in the ghostly hoof steps of praetorian detachments, medieval armies, crusaders in chain mail, caravans with turbaned riders and veiled women; Aromanian shepherds wrapped in felt *yamurluks* (capes) and commanding the immense flocks that fed the peninsula, ascetic missionaries from Syria in hand-cut sandals that blistered their feet, mute peasants on mules gathering herbs and hiding rifles under blankets for the next uprising, messengers with sealed letters, tax-collectors; *komitadjas*, postmen, and men pursued by blood feuds as if by Furies. And, of course, Sufi dervishes with carved staffs in their hands and the ecstatic chant *la elaha ella'llah* – and if you walked here through the alpine meadows, one breathless view opening after another like a book of secrets, you'd be singing too.

The traffic of six empires had trodden over the Gjavato Pass. But if you forgot about this human density, you saw that Pelagonia looked the way it sounded: a landscape so ancient and empty, so prehuman that it could fit no political map.

From the sprawling city of Bitola and all the way to the Greek border, the shabby road had been patched up and the traffic consisted of trucks and beaten-up local cars. Fields of corn, fields of burnt grasses, and on the balconies of village houses – strings of bright-red peppers hanging like curtains, a festival of autumn. After the quiet Greek checkpoint, the expansive plain and distant mountains continued, only now the empty road and road signage were first-class and the cars more expensive, the result of decades of EU cash injections.

On the map, the road to Greek Prespa didn't look like much, but it was. Soon, it started climbing west into the Verno Mountains. The scenic mountain town of Florina, with its thirty-three-metre hilltop cross for the thirty-three years of Christ, was quiet. Many business premises were for rent. By the time you reached this last town in Pelagonia, you were cut off twice: by altitude and by the border. After Florina, the narrow switchback road plunged and climbed through beautiful dark valleys, where the only presence was the odd drinking fountain with its stone basin. I was glad that Nick was waiting for me at the end of the road, or I

hoped he was – my mobile phone had no signal. He'd flown from London to Thessaloniki and driven to Prespa. In the two hours it took me to drive over the mountains, I counted just half a dozen cars and a log-truck. The road curves were so sharp, the tyres screeched in protest.

Road signs for Prespa began to appear, though there was only one fork: south to Lake Kastoria, and onwards to Prespa. You couldn't get lost on this road, only spooked. Disquiet stalked the sun-dappled mixed forests that rose on all sides. The only sound was the gentle bells of goats nowhere to be seen.

At the Vigla, or Sentinel, Pass, the highest point of the road where a Roman settlement had once been and a ski-resort operated in winter, the Vitsi Peak loomed close with its sharp Civil War monument. It was the site of the last battle of the Greek Civil War in the summer of 1949. A young couple had pulled over and were arguing viciously in what I took to be Macedonian, but it was Greek. The body language, the olive-skinned faces, the intonation, were the same. As I re-joined the road, an oncoming car found my presence irritating for some reason, and the bearded young driver gave me the fingers. Just driving here made you mean.

The road followed the steep valley of a river whose tributaries connected the Prespa basin with Lake Kastoria to the south, and with another mountain locally called Bellavoda, or White Water (2,177 metres), to the north, though it appeared on the map with a Greek name. In a village so small it was just a bend in the road, I stopped at a roadside cafe because there were people. Burly men sat talking, and a blind German shepherd dog came and sat by my feet like an old friend. I ordered a coffee. Inside, the house was full of musical instruments and photographs of armed men wearing white fustanellas and heroic moustaches, from the time of the Macedonian Struggle. A long-haired giant who looked like a brigand until I saw the gentle expression on his face, came to say hello, once the other men, rising heavily, drove off in their Jeeps. Clocking my registration plate, he switched to his local Slavic dialect. His name was Pavle.

It was an archaic dialect I hadn't heard before, but understood perfectly. He and his brother and their wives ran this establishment which was also their home, but despite the dramatic topography and the adventure tours they offered, including hunts for wild boar, there were few visitors. It was the legacy of *Emfilios Polemos*, the Greek Civil War.

'You may not feel it,' he said. 'But it's here.'

Oh, I feel it, I said.

'In winter, it's just a few of us by the fire and the wolves howling in the hills,' he said. 'Last winter, two bears came to the front door.'

The village was called Antartiko, the Place of Guerrillas.

'The old name is Zhelevo,' said Pavle. After one Zhele, probably a komita.

The *andartes* (Greek) and the komitas (Bulgarian-Macedonian) were bitter enemies of similar practices. Both had roamed the mountains, where they'd vanish, leaving the villagers they supposedly protected to suffer the consequences in the hands of the enemy band. But villages like this *were* the mountains. During the First World War, the French Armée d'Orient had a base here. I can't imagine how the Senegalese and Cameroonians felt in these harsh mountains, but one French soldier left his impressions of the September harvest and, hanging in house windows, maize whose 'bright yellow explodes next to dark red peppers and scarlet aprons that give, under the sun, a wonderful colour tableau'.

'Always fighting,' Pavle said placidly. 'Why? Why are we always fighting? First the Turks. Then the Germans. Then brother against brother.'

Like many villages and some towns in Aegean Macedonia, Antartiko-Zhelevo had had a majority Bulgarian-speaking population. 'Before the fighting,' Pavle said, 'there were two thousand five hundred people, five thousand goats and sheep, and one thousand head of cattle. Now there are thirty old people and a few chickens. We're the youngest here.'

He was my age. By *the fighting*, he meant the Greek Civil War. There were two time planes here: before the war and after.

A man in a Jeep drove slowly up the road.

'Come meet a visitor,' my host shouted in Greek, 'from Ohrid.'

The man joined us. There wasn't much else to do here. He was another bulky type with a surprisingly gentle face, and though he understood *nashe*, he was reluctant to speak it and replied only in Greek.

Dopika ('local idiom' in Greek) or *nashe* ('our lingo' in Slavic) was how the local dialect was referred to here, in a careful avoidance of the taboo word 'Macedonian' or (more distantly but still undesirably) 'Bulgarian'. In the Greek nationalist project, dopika served to diminish the cultural weight a real language might have, spoken by real people who were not Greeks. Or not entirely. The project was helped by the fact that the various regional Slavic dialects of northern Greece had never been standardised into a national language and remained at a somewhat debased, domestic level.

'Before the fighting, there were twenty-five thousand people in Greek Prespa,' Pavle said. He had warmed up and seemed keen to get things off his chest. At the end of the war, there were just one thousand

people left by the lake, all in a state of trauma. ‘Now we are around three hundred. Even the lake is shrinking. When we were kids, we swam every day, the water clear as a teardrop. Now it's full of ...’

He couldn’t remember the Slavic word.

‘Reeds,’ a wheezy voice said. It was the old man in a wheelchair under the awning, so desiccated he was mostly head. He’d been there all along, listening.

‘Here’s living history for you,’ Pavle said. The old man looked at us but said nothing.

When the old man was a young lad with his flock on the hill, Pavle said, a German soldier came up to him and for no reason smashed his face with the butt of his gun and left him for dead. Once recovered, the lad was conscripted by the andartes of EAM (the National Liberation Front) to fight the German and Bulgarian occupiers near the city of Drama. No sooner was the war over than the Civil War broke out. Or rather, it had never stopped – for the different resistance factions in Greece had entered a bitter conflict, just like in Albania and Yugoslavia next door.

But Greece was already ticked off as belonging to the Western sphere of influence by Churchill and Stalin, in what Churchill called ‘a naughty document’. On 9 October 1944, in Moscow, Churchill said to Stalin: ‘Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Rumania and Bulgaria.’

He scribbled percentages on a napkin, for each of the Balkan countries:

Rumania – Russia 90%, The others 10%
Greece – Great Britain 90% (in accord with U.S.A.), Russia 10%
Yugoslavia – 50-50%
Hungary – 50-50%
Bulgaria – Russia 75%, The others 25%

‘I pushed this across to Stalin,’ Churchill wrote in his war memoir, ‘who had by then heard the translation. There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all settled in no more time than it takes to set down.’

So there was the fate of my family, of Pavle’s, of Nick’s, of tens of millions of others, scribbled on that napkin.

Starved and traumatised, post-war Greece swarmed with Nazi collaborators and proto-Fascist militias. Thanks to energetic British meddling, domestic Greek politics were manipulated into a state where it was possible to enforce the full disarmament of the leftist resistance fighters.

Then deport them to prison islands en masse. The persecution and murder of resistance fighters by the Greek Nationalist Army and affiliated militias matched the Nazis' work in Greece. Rural populations like the Prespa villages lived in a permanent state of White Terror, though Red Terror arrived soon enough too.

This culminated in the 1944 *Dekemvriana* month in Athens, when militias opened fire on civilian demonstrators while British troops looked on. The resulting deaths and injuries sparked off an armed conflict in Athens which lasted a month and ended with the capitulation of the left. British troops under General Scobie took an active part. Their sudden new Greek allies were the thuggish Security Battalions and the Nazi collaborators of yesterday; their sudden new enemies were their anti-Nazi allies of yesterday, the embattled Greek left. The situation went as far as General Scobie imposing martial law on Athens and ordering the aerial bombardment, during the Dekemvriana events, of a whole neighbourhood.

By 1946, when the Communist Party was made illegal, some hundred thousand leftists were rounded up and either executed, imprisoned or exiled. But the left regrouped in the mountains, and the full-blown guerrilla war that followed had its main theatre in the north-west of Greece: Pindus along the Albanian border and Verno here, for these remote regions provided two vital things for the newly formed Democratic Army of Greece (DSE): recruits and mountains. The Democratic Army was the military arm of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), and the inheritor of ELAS (the Greek People's Liberation Army) which had been the military arm of EAM.

The extraordinarily vicious Civil War lasted three and a half years and was won by the Greek National Army of King George, first with the help of Churchill's Britain, and after 1947, of Truman's America. The Greek king was a British puppet and in the wake of Greece's liberation from the Nazis, Churchill was hell-bent on reinstating him: he and the old ways were the best bulwark against Communism and the new ways. Greece was possibly the only country in post-war Europe where those who participated in the resistance against the Nazis were marked for elimination, while Nazi collaborators were given political, military and judiciary power.

'Once again, our young lad was taken by the andartes,' Pavle continued. And when the Civil War ended, he was imprisoned on the island of Makronisos for having fought on the losing side. The official term for leftists was 'Communist bandits' or just 'bandits' – at the time and for decades after. The Greek Civil War – the first real war of the Cold War – ended with 158,000 dead and one million displaced, many

permanently.

The old man pressed a button on his wheelchair and glided past us with a nod.

'He has perfect recall but won't talk,' Pavle said.

Why not?

'Fear.'

Fear? He survived the Nazis, the Civil War and Makronisos!

The two younger men sipped their coffees in silence. Fear, like grief, does not always need a current object.

'But I am not afraid,' Pavle said. 'Write this down. I am not afraid to speak our language. For twenty years we've been waiting for the old lake road to open. To bring some life back to Prespa.'

His Greek wife, who didn't understand dopika, had been sitting beside him all along, playing with his long hair like a bored child. She didn't let me pay for the coffee and invited me to come again.

They were a haunted bunch, living in the shadow of these blood hills. It was said that in the last months of the war, the earth turned red with the blood of the slain. The other brother's wife was a gaunt, pretty woman with a face so stricken that you couldn't look at it for more than a second. She was either ill or freshly bereaved. The brothers were known in the area as 'the priest's sons'.

I drove over the broken road out of Antartiko and several old men and women sitting on a bench waved at me with wordless smiles. Most of the village houses were abandoned, trees growing through the windows as if reaching out to grab you and tell you something.

The road to Little Prespa took the long, lonely time that roads to nowhere take. Just past the Prevali ridge, when I had almost given up hope of seeing the lake again, it appeared. What I was seeing was Little Prespa, and it didn't look small at all. It looked so majestic that my pulse quickened. The road descended. The flatlands at lake level were tame, agricultural. Monocultural, in fact: everywhere were bean fields, *fasoulakia*. But there were no people. I drove over the inlet between the two lakes, which had been a single lake before the water level dropped and mud was deposited in such large quantities by the nearest rivers that it had eventually been diverted into Little Prespa.

Little Prespa stretched towards Albania into a wetland wilderness, the water green with vegetation and brown with reedbeds. On the map, Little Prespa is a mini-me of Prespa, shaped by geomorphological and human forces into almost identical jagged teardrops.

The road began climbing the hilly peninsula that jutted into the lake like the head of a fish whose mouth was Psarades. I passed a small

chapel called St George and a sign warning there were bears. Once over that pass, large Prespa appeared below, with its elusive gleam. Small, sharp, black hills rose from the water all the way to the north – dozens of them, a mirage. Prespa expressed something that cannot be put into words, or even feelings. High above the lake, I pulled over and sat in the car. I could not go on without adjusting to the majesty of the scene. Like the hills themselves, this place lifted you up and cast you down. In the still air, the juniper trees looked painted in silver. I wept without knowing why.

In the village square by the reeds, Nick was tucking into a green salad. Darkness was falling. I stumbled out of the car, hugged him, sat down at the table, and because Nick started laughing, I too laughed. My head was spinning.

'Can you believe this road?' I said.

'I know. It's a relief to see you, I have to say.' Nick poured me a glass of wine. 'I was starting to worry.'

Nick had an instantly winning quality, a warm and unaffected exuberance. With an unerring magpie's eye for the telling detail, an encyclopedic memory and boundless curiosity, he was especially interested in the former Soviet world and the Balkans, but really, his interests were omnivorous. Nick was a polyglot: he spoke five Slavic languages, Spanish, some Greek, some Romanian, some Mandarin, and some Hebrew (his partner was Israeli). His friends periodically asked: Are you sure you're not a spy?

'I recommend the catch of the day,' he said.

The fish was delicious, and of all the Prespan villages, Psarades alone still felt like a fishing village. Even its name meant The Fishermen. There were five restaurants open, mostly empty.

'European subsidies,' Nick said. 'As with the bean plantations.'

But after those mountains, I wasn't surprised that not many visitors made it here. It really was the end of the road.

Another Australian, a man from Perth, sat at the next table; he'd left here as a teenager fifty years ago. He always thought he'd bring his wife and kids, but they preferred Bali, so here he was like a cuckoo in the old family house. Of the two thousand people of this village once called Nivitsi, sixty were left. He spoke a mangled mix of lingos.

'Australian Lerinski,' Nick grinned, and the man nodded. Lerin was the old Bulgarian name of Florina and of the region.

'I grew up with Lerinski because of my grandmother,' Nick said. 'It's the first language I heard, before English.'

Nick grew up in Adelaide. His maternal grandmother had lived in a street full of exiles from Lerinsko, the region here. One day, on his way to school, one of them cornered him at the bus stop. ‘And she told me how, after the Civil War, she’d gone in search of her children. They’d been taken by the Red Cross to Poland. It took her years, but she found them and brought them to Australia.’ Another time, another old woman from the diaspora stopped him and without preamble told him how, when planes dropped American napalm on their village here in 1949, she and her mother were buried alive in a bomb crater. Next to their house. ‘They dug themselves out with their bare hands. She carried her mother on her back to the next village. She’d never told anyone about it and needed to get it out.’

I pictured young Nick walking with his schoolbag and that woman’s burden.

The final phase of the Civil War was called by survivors *the catastrophe.* Entire villages were obliterated by the army and paramilitary units. Children were burnt alive in houses, with mothers forced to watch, in revenge for the fathers joining the andartes. When women and children were forced away from their burnt houses in the direction of the nearest border, they often had nothing except the clothes they stood in; everything down to the last chicken had been taken by militants.

In the ethnic Macedonian villages of northern Greece and the Macedonian diaspora in Australia, there were code expressions like ‘She’s from Bapchor’, to indicate a person who had been through unimaginable horror. Bapchor was one of the ‘napalm villages’. Today it’s neither on the map nor on the ground.

‘I grew up with katastrofata,’ Nick said.

He didn’t know what it meant at first, he just soaked up the vibes.

‘Growing up, there was anxiety about everything,’ he said. ‘Nothing was too small to worry ourselves sick about. Of course, the war was never discussed, it was too big. My mother picked it up from her mother. The anxiety. Even though she’s Aussie-born and was an adult before she visited Macedonia for the first time!’

Nick’s grandmother was from a nearby village, once entirely Slavic-speaking.

‘We don’t go there anymore,’ he said. ‘It’s been completely Hellenised. Not a scrap of its old identity remains. When my grandmother visited in the amnesty of 1987, she couldn’t believe it. No one dared speak Macedonian. All the names were changed. People whispered about the war.’

Forty years after the war, people whispered about the war. They did even now, here – *seventy* years after the war.

'My grandmother said: this is not my village, not my home.' She never visited again. Her first husband had fought with ELAS against the Nazis, then joined the Democratic Army. Wounded in the last battle on Mount Vitsi, he died en route to the field hospital.

'He is buried in the family grave in the village, but his name appears in very small letters at the bottom of the tombstone,' Nick said. 'Like a pariah.'

One of Greece's many dishonoured heroes of the resistance. In the wake of the war, his family fell into the category of 'enemy'. Atrocities were especially rife against the Bulgarian-Macedonian villages here in the north, seen by the regime as a fifth column, as doubly 'bad Greeks': for speaking a non-Greek language and for being Socialist-Communist sympathisers.

The 1913 border that partitioned Macedonia had left hundreds of thousands of Slavic-speaking Macedonians and Bulgarians behind in Greece. This determined their harsh fate. Cut off from their compatriots in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, they became an unwanted minority in a nation-state that was apparently allergic to ethno-linguistic and religious diversity. During the Metaxas regime in the 1930s, 'Slav-speakers and Turkish-speakers ... were mercilessly persecuted, their languages forbidden in public, banned in the school-yard,' writes Fred A. Reed in *Salonica Terminus*. Things worsened immeasurably after the Greek Civil War.

Back in the village, the young widow who was to become Nick's grandmother was urged by her in-laws to disappear, before the paramilitary units arrived and torched the house. Australia was the obvious destination: her father, a gardener, had already settled there.

'My great-grandfather had arrived in Australia in 1929, just in time for the Depression!' Nick said. He'd left his wife and children behind. The young widow too left behind her two small children in the care of her mother, and sailed to Australia. A year into Adelaide, she met a young man at a Macedonian party and soon, Nick's mother was born.

The young man was a political refugee too – but from the Bulgarian Communist government. His family too hailed from Aegean Macedonia and had been expelled into Bulgaria in 1928 during the 'population exchange' between Greece and Bulgaria. By the late 1940s, he had fallen foul of the Bulgarian Communist authorities and, leaving behind a wife, a small daughter and a new-born son, he sailed from Naples to Australia on a ship called *The Nelly*.

‘His escape was dramatic and clouded in secrecy. And as the years passed, increasingly sounding like something out of *Zorba the Greek.*’

In the wake of his defection, his family were internally exiled by the Communist state, treated as ‘enemies of the people’, and lived harsh lives.

‘My uncle is an angry man. He says his life has been stolen.’

Meanwhile, Nick’s mother didn’t know she had half-siblings until they turned up. First her half-sister, then her half-brother, pale and serious in patched-up coats, just arrived from Greece with their grandmother, Nick’s great-grandmother – yet another woman whose husband had gone away on a gurbet that had lasted a lifetime. But now that they were reunited, they fought constantly, Nick laughed.

By the age of six, Nick’s mother was inseparable from her parents, accompanying them everywhere, on every trip to stores, governmental agencies, doctor’s appointments. Because her parents never learned English.

‘I know, it’s amazing, but it wasn’t so unusual,’ Nick said.

‘But why? Why did they burden their daughter like that?’

‘Out of sheer bloody-mindedness, *inat*,’ Nick said, using the pan-Balkan word for it. ‘But also, I suspect, a delayed effect of trauma.’

A part of them remained frozen in time. And there had been the resentment of being strangers in a strange land, separated from their real identities while unable to go back, Nick said.

There was no way back. Not learning English was an act of protest. Oddly, they picked up Italian from friends in the expat community. Even more oddly, they had initially spoken to each other in Greek – because their Macedonian dialects were so far apart that they had communication problems.

‘As a kid I went between my grandparents who each insisted on their dialect version of simple words like potato! Because of *inat*. I’d translate between them.’

Although Nick had three siblings, it was him, the first-born, who carried the burden. Sensitised from an early age, probably from the womb, he formalised his commitment to his exiled grandparents by becoming a professional translator from all the Balkan Slavic languages.

‘I remember my grandmother’s tears of happiness when I started writing the Cyrillic alphabet at Masso school: К, Л, М, Н, О, П… Those letters meant so much to her.’

One of his early memories was watching the Olympics on television. His grandfather, who didn’t contact his Bulgarian wife and

children out of guilt and pain (he guessed their sad fate, and he knew there was no way back for him – he was, in the Communist state's terminology, a *non-returnee*, a dead man), rooted for the Bulgarian gymnasts and weight-lifters instead. He was proud of 'our boys and girls' when they won gold, and Nick was proud with him.

Nick's father, in turn, was one of the many young men who took the opportunity to emigrate from Tito's Yugoslav Macedonia. He had arrived in Australia with a friend in the early 1970s, seeking adventure. Though Australia failed to live up to his imagination and he returned home, by then he was utterly unable to toe the Communist Party line, and his own mother, afraid for him and the family's good name, urged him to leave again, back to Australia, whether he wanted to or not.

In Kanun terms, he had been banished by the tribe.

'He'd run away from Tito, but who was on the first page of all our Yugoslav books in Australia? Tito. *Tito, Tato, Mama*. Tito came first!' Another of Nick's early memories is of a city full of the portraits of a man who had just died. They were on a visit to Yugoslavia. 'Tito. I remember feeling bewildered by this mass sorrow.'

Nick's father, homesick after all those years away from his homeland, had wanted to bring his young family on a visit to Yugoslav Macedonia, to see whether there was any way back. But there was no way back.

Nick was born of the confluence of three Macedonias which together made up all of geographic Macedonia. Because of the borders, it was a confluence of exile, but it also meant that he had multiple identities.

To the north, the then Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was his father's birthplace.

Aegean Macedonia to the south, now northern Greece, was his maternal grandmother's birthplace.

The province of Pirin Macedonia, in western Bulgaria, was his maternal grandfather's home.

Each came with its own internal contradictions and conflicts. Nick was like an Atlas carrying the weight of Macedonia on his shoulders, trying to stay cheerful – too cheerful sometimes – and not collapse, not get sucked in by the ancestral vortex.

'Maybe that's why you're always on the move,' I said, but the same was true of me. Nick and I mirrored each other in some respects. Because our family histories mirrored each other. 'Maybe restlessness is in our blood.'

He shrugged. His grandfather's restlessness, my grandmother's need to escape – these impulses had only been magnified in us by emigration.

'I just want to see as many places as possible before I get too old to travel,' he said. But he was only in his early forties.

In 1987, just two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, his grandfather had arranged to meet with his grown-up son, the one he had left behind when he fled from Bulgaria. The dad had travelled from Australia to Yugoslavia, ostensibly for a family wedding but really to see his son, and the son had obtained permission to cross the border from Bulgaria into Yugoslavia, for one day. He had looked forward to meeting his dad his whole life. He was in his forties. But the Bulgarian border authorities kept preventing him, asking for more and more papers that he had to produce. Weeks passed. He could not cross the border.

'My grandfather extended his stay, but in the end, he couldn't wait any longer and made his way to Athens, for his return flight to Australia. You can imagine how he felt on that flight.'

Just hours after the dad had left Yugoslavia for Athens, and with the poisonous intent totalitarian regimes specialise in, the son was finally allowed into Yugoslavia.

'Everyone in the family strongly believes that this was too much of a coincidence,' Nick said. 'So there must have been a Bulgarian State Security agent tailing my grandfather in Yugoslavia all along, and once it was clear that my grandfather had left for Athens, then the border officials were tipped off to let my uncle cross the border.'

He did. Only to be told that his father had left a few hours before.

'And on hearing the news from his father's Yugoslav family, he just – howled,' Nick said. He had collapsed. He had crossed the border alone, and now he was alone in his sorrow.

'He howled like an animal, and the mountains picked up his howl and echoed it back. I think my uncle never got over that moment.'

A moment of irreversible loss. A parting like a death. The role State Security played makes this story not just tragic, but evil. This is how Communist regimes punished their non-returnees: by tormenting their children. The son did meet the father, years later – he travelled to Australia for it – but only in the last weeks of the father's life when dementia meant that the old man didn't know he was looking at his long-lost first-born. The son was never *seen* by the father.

The village and the mountain around it had gone black under the starry sky. The only sound was the treacly glug of water in the reeds. We went to our cold rooms in a stone house, and I slept like a stone at the bottom of the lake.

*

In the morning, when I walked across the sun-struck square, past the police station with its bored cops and their swanky 'Hellenic Police' motorboat, an impatient Nick and a smiling boatman in a captain's peaked cap were waiting for me at the pontoon. I was an hour late, not realising that Greece and the Republic of (North) Macedonia ran on separate times. A border wasn't enough. Closing the lakeside checkpoint wasn't enough. They also had to have different time zones. Even though, strictly speaking, they were Macedonia and Macedonia.

The smiling boatman was from the Macedonian-speaking villages across the Albanian border. He'd come over in the 1990s, like the woman who looked after our guesthouse for five euros a day, and who told me: 'We're all *nashi*, our people here, and the Greeks know it.'

'We all speak Macedonian here,' the boatman said, and we set off in his new boat. 'Just not near the police building.'

From our new vantage point on the lake, Psarades looked small, isolated, as if tossed into the water from the top of the cliffs, 'The real residents' – the captain pointed at the hilltop cemetery. 'We're all just visitors here.'

Because his mother was born in Greece and his father in Albania, he'd been called a Greek there and an Albanian here, though they were Macedonians. He didn't mind. He enjoyed himself like someone who had processed cruder forms of struggle in his life, and was now tuning in to the longer view. The lakeview.

Two pelicans with enormous wingspans – three metres, the captain said – flew over us, landing not far from the boat, and bobbed about on the water. Prespa has one of only two European colonies of the globally endangered Dalmatian pelicans: the other one is on the Danube.

The captain told us an origin myth about the formation of Lake Prespa.

'A long time ago, there was a spring in the middle of a valley. Two shepherds came to drink from it, but fell asleep and forgot to turn it off.' It is not said whether the shepherds survived the flooding, but towns were lost under the water which eventually became the lake. The spring remained forever open.

'Fishermen in Albania say that sometimes when the water is very still, they can see the outlines of lost houses in the water.' When we asked about the water border, the captain pointed and said:

'Where there's sun, it's Greece. Where there's shadow, it's Albania.'

We could wave to Dry Village across the water and almost make out Bojko's parents' house. We docked at the cave Bojko had pointed out,

and Nick and I climbed the hundred and seventy steps to the top of a vast chilly cavern forty metres above the lake. A humble church nestled at the echoey top, and the karst was nibbled by niches where fifteen monks had lived from fishing and hunting. Only juniper grew here, and in early summer, tiny orchids. On the shore across, there had been nuns. Perhaps they visited each other in those coffin-like Chuns, and exchanged herbal recipes. The inside was painted in the early fifteenth century at the time of the Serbian lord Vukashin. The only reason Vukashin had retained his fiefdom during the early Ottoman decades was the remoteness of lower Prespa.

But the narrative of the church had been tampered with more recently: the Cyrillic lettering had been rubbed out, and either left blank or replaced with Greek script clearly newer than it should be. Christ held a blank book. This recurred in all the Prespan churches we visited. Diligent whitewashing had ensured that no Cyrillic script could be proven to have existed at all.

Charming scenes of miracles and natural phenomena abounded: the wind, human-faced and full-cheeked, a lake monster with teeth ingesting a white mass, maybe a swan.

'A cave is a mneme, a damaged cell of memory preserved when all that existed in the open air – peoples, crafts, cults – has rotted away,' writes Neal Ascherson in *Stone Voices.* His subject is the hermit caves of western Scotland and the Hebridean islands, once home to St Columba and early Christians of the north-west, who had 'turned their backs' to the warmer south as a gesture of penitence, to face the harsh Atlantic gales. Here, in the south-east, hermits had turned their backs to the violent land, to face the timeless light of the lake.

Looking at Mary's defaced countenance, it made sense that this place was called Virgin Eleusa, the Merciful One. Her face, even scraped out, managed to exude understanding. The space itself exuded quiet humanity. Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of memory, is also the mother of all the Muses, and this cave held memories that were almost palpable, even after centuries open to the elements. After the cave, the light of the lake blinded us. Along the small jetty, a line of thin-necked cormorants perched like a welcoming party in black. Red ducks with black-tufted heads bobbed nearby. We were of no consequence to them.

A liberating thought: to be of no consequence.

'Great crested grebes,' the captain corrected me, then took us to a place in the lake where the three territorial waters converged. 'This is the deepest point of the lake,' he said. 'Fifty metres.'

We could wave to Nakolec and Pretor but go no further. The water boundaries pushed you away from the lake and back into its tormented hinterland. Even under a foreign occupier, the hermits of Prespa had been freer to move between islands and shores than the Prespans of today, who live in sovereign nation-states.

Back on the road, there was a place Nick and I wanted to see, on the fish-like peninsula that jutted into the lake with Psarades as its mouth. It was known as the Zachariadis Cave. It wasn't signposted from the main road but we could see the steps hacked into the hill. We took the steps, hard-going in the midday sun. And that was after breakfast and a good night's sleep, much more than the guerrillas had enjoyed.

Below us opened the silent fields of green beans, tied at their tops. But no people. Who ate all these beans? Later, I learned that the subsidised bean monoculture had killed off other cultures including animal husbandry, and that many absentee Prespans made profits from their bean plantations but lived elsewhere. The forest at the top had been a refuge for the Democratic Army at the end of the war, as they were pushed into the lake, and Yugoslavia. Then Tito slammed the door shut and it was endgame.

The villages of Psarades and German had been their arms and provisions bases. And up here, inside this cave, had been their HQ. Somewhere higher up, in another cave, was their field hospital. Nick climbed into the cave despite the feral smell.

'There's nothing here,' he reported, emerging cheerfully.

If Nick's grandmother's first husband had survived his wounds en route to the field hospital, Nick would not exist.

The forest held unspecified distress, and I was keen to leave. We took the stone steps down and just then, a park ranger rushed up towards us.

'Ah, good!' he said in Greek, and smiled. 'I saw your car. We have a bear with cubs in the cave. I came to check that everybody was OK.'

We thanked him, and I suspect I said to Nick, 'I told you it smelt feral!'

On the side of the deserted road was a small monument.

'Oh my God, this is new!' Nick said.

It was a humble granite piece bearing the mountain-like triangle, symbol of the Democratic Army (the DSE), and marking this spot as the centre of its activity between 1946 and 49. It had been erected by the Greek Communist Party (the KKE) this year.

Nick stood beside it, sombre-faced, elbow bent in the Communist fist salute. We didn't point out the sad irony of this moment because it went without saying. Neither of us was under any illusion about the ideology that had driven the Greek Communist Party's high command. Under Zachariadis, a Stalinist, they had highjacked the struggle of the left, hobbled their own cause through the brutality of their methods, and stamped the war with their particular brand of fanaticism and incompetence. They had planned a Stalinist-style dictatorship in the event of victory. Greece would have been gripped by the same tyranny its neighbours were already suffering under. But history had decided that it would be gripped by a different kind of tyranny.

Above a village called Orovo that didn't exist anymore, Nick and I stumbled across another surprise monument, brand new.

'Oh my God, Vera Foteva!'

She was the figurehead on the granite slab. This meant nothing to me, but Nick had grown up with photographs of her and other partisans on the walls of diaspora culture halls. She was a hero in the DSE pantheon, and by all accounts a remarkable woman. Here was a monument to the Second Congress of the Pan-Hellenic Democratic Union of Women.

'The Communists had a way with words, didn't they!' Nick said.

Vera Foteva's story tells of the moral and political morass that was the Civil War. By September 1949, the Greek Communist Party under Zachariadis had capitulated. In a typically untruthful turn of phrase, Zachariadis proclaimed a 'temporary ceasefire'. Foteva and her comrades fled to Albania and later to the USSR. But the KKE, who regrouped in Tashkent, then in the USSR, undertook internal purges in the 1950s, ostensibly in search of those culpable for the failure of the Civil War. Foteva was accused of being an American spy. If the Communists wanted to frame you, you went down either as American spy or as Titoist, a punishable offence after the Stalin-Tito split.

'As an ethnic Macedonian and a woman, she was an easy scapegoat,' Nick said. He knew her biography by heart. She was tried in the USSR and did five years in the Gulag, after which she was internally exiled to Alma-Ata.

'But she never lost her spirit' Nick said. 'Eventually, she was allowed into Yugoslav Macedonia where she married, formed a folk band with other refugee women from here called Kosturchanki, Women of Kastoria, and remained a Communist to her dying day!'

In 2004, a few years before her death, the Greek government announced a general amnesty, and blacklisted refugees like her were allowed back into Greece.

'For nine days.'

Then they had to leave.

'Even the KKE betrayed us, once the war was over,' Nick said. 'They have never acknowledged the mass participation of ethnic Macedonians in the war. As if we never existed.'

Out of all the DSE combatants, up to forty per cent had been ethnic Macedonians and Bulgarians, including Muslims. With a lump in my throat, I photographed Nick with Vera Foteva, stony against the mute Aegean sky.

The following day, we drove south to Lake Kastoria of fur-trading fame and once on a trade route linked to Ohrid-Prespa in the north and Epirus in the south.

'The Communists banned love,' said a man in a village where many of the handsome houses had dissolved in the rain down to red stumps, with holes like gouged eyes. Others still hung on to their elaborate facades with dates, owners' names, and balconies.

'The punishment for love was death,' said his friend.

They were born during the Civil War. We had found them sitting in the shade of an old walnut tree. One of them had had a partisan mother and a father in the Nationalist Army – but this didn't mean much when so many conscriptions on both sides had been forced. Women between the ages of seventeen and forty were swept into the Democratic Army. In the last desperate year of the war, boys as young as ten were taken. The other man's siblings had been evacuated by the partisans to Romania. The father had survived Makronisos. Now a hundred and five years old, he'd never talked about it.

'What happened on that island can't be put into words,' he said. I had read some documents and memoirs of Makronisos and had nightmares afterwards. Male rape and torture were commonplace.

'But the Communists were bad too,' said his friend. 'They shot their own.'

'Zachariadis brought katastrofata to this country,' said a massive old man with a young man's spark in his eye, who'd driven by in a tractor and stopped to chat.

'Greece has been devoured by her own,' said the man whose parents had fought on opposing sides.

'We all took a bite at Greece, and it has been eaten away,' said the massive old man.

'The dead outnumber the living,' said a younger man. 'See the cemetery by the church? There's a good twenty thousand souls buried there. And how many of us are alive? No more than thirty.'

Even his own daughter had left for America. He'd not finished primary school, back in the 1950s, because he had to look after the animals in the *orman*, he said, using the Turkish word for forest. The dialect here was full of Turkish words like *asker* for army, and of countless archaic Bulgarian words. They said *sinora* for border, a Greek word.

'It's true,' the men agreed. 'Our language has everything: Bulgarian, Turkish, Albanian, Greek.'

The many-coloured blossom of Macedonia, clinging to the bitter soil.

'You're looking for stories? My story is a short one,' said the massive old man.

He was one of the twenty-five thousand detsa begalci removed by the Democratic Army to Eastern Europe. He'd ended up in Poland, aged fourteen.

'We arrived in Gdansk in winter. We walked in the streets, but –'

His face suddenly twitched and tears came from his blue eyes, which he wiped with a cracked hand, then cleared his throat.

'But there was nothing left. No streets, no buildings, no people. Just big rags of snow falling from the sky. I thought to myself: My God, the Germans have really done it.'

He learned a trade in a factory and lived in a home with other refugees, Macedonian- and Greek-speakers. They helped rebuild Poland. He'd enjoyed his years there, he said; it gave him a chance to learn the ways of the world. 'Eight years later, they started allowing some of us back and I wanted to see my mother. I never went back to Poland. Here it's always been poor, but it's my home. This is the story. A short one, like I said.'

How do you sum up your life to a stranger two generations younger than you? He got back into his tractor and drove away with a cheery wave of his huge hand.

In a process known by the sinister word *paedomazoma*, 'the gathering of children', children had been taken from their families by the KKE, who feared, correctly, that the kids would be either killed in cross-fire or removed by the Government Army and placed in the government re-education camps known as *paedopolises*, children's cities. Twenty-five thousand kids in fact ended up in these camps, under the tutelage of the monarchy, where they were provided for, educated, and indoctrinated in absolute loyalty to the Greek monarchy and Church. The only permissible language and identity was Greek. Like the refugee kids sent to the Eastern bloc, they were separated from their parents for years, sometimes forever.

Paedomazoma was historically associated with the dreaded Ottoman 'blood tax', and still strikes a note of dread, just like the expression *detsa begalci* sends cold shivers down the generational spine. And while the word *paedomazoma* contains the sorrow of forced departure from the homeland, *detsa begalci* contains the sorrow of impossible return.

'There is nothing here but *orman* and fighting,' said the younger man. His grandfather had been an officer in the Bulgarian army. The other man's grandfather too. 'I am paying for my parents' war. Can you tell me why?'

His daughter would never come back, he said. She didn't speak *nashe*, only Greek, and her child didn't speak Greek, only English. She wanted it all to *cease.*

'And I wish her well,' he said, with a bitter expression.

'But,' smiled the man whose father was a hundred and five, 'visitors make us happy. Thank you for visiting.'

Nick and I drove on to Kastoria in silence. He was used to this level of psycho-geographic blight, from previous visits to northern Greece. I wasn't.

Greek Prespa was a naturalist's paradise, but life here had been harsh for generations. The men under the walnut tree told us how superstitious the people here had been. Once, a villager was seen walking the opposite way to where he was going before turning back onto the right track. What are you doing? one of the men had asked him. Trying to trick the evil eye, the villager said, so it won't find me.

The war 'transformed the villages of northern Greece from homes where children led difficult, but safe and secure lives into battlefields of random violence and sudden death', write the anthropologists Loring Danforth and Riki Van Boeschoten in *Children of the Greek Civil War*. Many of the refugee children in witness accounts said that 'the People's republics' had opened their eyes to the world. Likewise, many of those housed in the government camps cherished the education and worldliness it had given them, in exchange for the stony besa of village life where you are forever paying for someone's war.

By 1905, in the wake of the Ilinden Uprising, the lie of the political land was clear to perceptive outsiders. Henry Brailsford, passing through Prespa, wrote that the traveller's impressions of 'the Bulgarians of Macedonia' were 'rarely favourable'. They were a people 'with few external attractions; and [they] seldom trouble to sue for sympathy or assist the process of mutual understanding … [The Bulgarian of Macedonia] will not call on you unbidden at your hotel, or invite you to his schools, or insist

that you shall visit his churches.'

This syndrome of obscurity was aggravated by the fact that 'all their best men are exiles in free Bulgaria. There is no educated class left to leaven the rest, or to represent the nation to the traveller.' Macedonian towns were like the people: silent, stubborn, inscrutable. Until, one evening in Pelagonia, he happened on a peasant family and heard them sing 'a song of revolt': 'From that evening onwards the air was always in my ears. Sometimes it was a schoolboy who whistled it in the streets; sometimes a group of young men who chanted it, with all its daring words, within earshot of a Turkish sentry.'

Doubly battered by the Greek clergy and the Ottoman regime who colluded when it suited them, too oppressed to even sing openly, the land sang for them. The mountains, the lakes, the forest glades vibrated with a spirit that couldn't articulate itself except in a 'song of doom, sung by the land itself'.

We could hear it still, in the empty valleys of Prespa.

Shockingly, Macedonian song lyrics seem to be banned from official events in Greece to this day. A great fear must lie behind this. But what lies behind the fear?

'The Greek term for Macedonian folk songs is *tragoudia dihos logia*,' Nick said. 'Literally, songs without words.'

At official events, people were still forced to play the songs instrumentally, moving their lips voicelessly. As if their tongues had been cut off. That was the aim, it seemed – to render them dumb, voiceless.

Xenophobia: fear and loathing of the other.

'Of course, private parties are another story,' Nick said.

The present-day 'Macedonian Question' of the name, as well as the politics of silencing, were a direct consequence of unresolved bilateral, and national, trauma from the Greek Civil War. Danforth and Boeschoten call this 'memory wars' and the moving case histories they present – of both Macedonian and Greek exiles – shed light on the depth of the wounds that people sustained before, during and after those tragic years. And on why the political ghosts of this little-known war are, in effect, Europe's ghosts.

I was intrigued to find that Aegean Macedonia and Thrace to the east (an ancient region shared today by Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey) were identified by the late pioneering historian Jean Manco as the original homeland of what in linguistics is often called the Balkan group of languages. This is the homeland of the speakers of the unknown proto-parent of Armenian, Greek, Illyrian and Thracian – our dimly remote ancestors who had migrated here from Asia. The cultures of Macedonia

and Thrace – that is, the southern Balkans – were born out of a diversity that survived many empires and thousands of years, only to be assaulted in the last few generations by nation-states with a taste for the biscuit-factory line of history, as Neal Ascherson has called it.

The result? Human and environmental monoculture, and rapid decline.

But we were in for a surprise. In a village above Lake Kastoria, a man with sad blue eyes was delighted to have customers in his cafe and told us, when asked, that his five siblings had all been sent away during the war and two had never returned. Nearby we discovered a cemetery with a locked church and a lake view. Above the door, St Nicholas's name was scratched out and he was left nameless as well as eyeless, but among the graves we stumbled across a black marble slab that stopped us in our tracks.

'Oh my God!' Nick said.

The man's name was written twice: in Greek and in Cyrillic. A common sight in Albanian Prespa, which was openly bilingual, but it was unheard of here – not only for having been done in the first place, in defiance of the seventy-year-long ban on Cyrillic, but also for not having been defaced. The man had died a few years ago.

'Oh my God,' Nick kept saying, in shock. 'I never thought I'd see this in Greece. I wish my grandmother could see it!'

And tears welled up in his eyes, as they had in hers, when he'd written his first Cyrillic letters. They were the same tears, filtered by time as if by the karst. In the Cyrillic-Greek letters of this man's name was the hidden story of Aegean Macedonia, with its vanishing dialects, people, place names and songs. We stood by the grave of this man whose story we didn't know but whose face on the marble was stamped with endurance, and I was reminded of Edith Durham's sketch of an acquaintance in Ohrid: 'Being a Balkan Christian he has inherited a tendency always to expect the worst.'

'Yep!' Nick said and we laughed, though I too was crying now, for company. Though I'd never met Nick's grandmother or mother, I felt as if I knew them.

The Balkan Muslims had it worst in the second half of the twentieth century. Either way we, the distant offspring of this land, were not conditioned for good news. This quiet glimpse of tolerance in a landscape disfigured by denial choked us up. Good things brought us an unfamiliar sensation. Joy was a precursor to grief. Reunion brought fear of parting. And parting was like death.

We must have stayed by that tombstone for only a few minutes, but it felt like a long time. Small acts of kindness go a long way.

We drove for two days up and down the hills of Prespa, rarely meeting a soul. The only sound was the bells of goats we never saw, nor their shepherds.

For centuries, Prespa had been the domain of pastoralist shepherds known as Sarakatsani or Karakachani (from the Turkish *kara* and *kachan*, 'black smugglers', referring to their nomadic ways and black woollen dress, and their uncanny border-crossing skills). Here, they'd come up from Thessaly and the Pindus and spend the summer in reed huts above Prespa. Many others were based in the Rhodope Mountains to the east, and there is even a breed of Karakachan mountain dog in Bulgaria. They were an old subculture of the southern Balkans, deeply connected with nature's cycles. A handful of such families survived near Prespa, who'd gather in the centre of lakeside villages like German at the end of the season, with their cattle, then depart back to the south. They sold their milk to locals, for small-scale cheese production.

Dotted along the empty roads and packed with political symbolism were numerous monuments to senior Greek military figures from the Civil War. Some bore the Byzantine eagle that stands for ultra-Orthodoxy and the far right, and a couple were even inscribed in Katharevousa – literally, 'purified Greek'.

'Katharevousa on a military monument is a statement of ultra-nationalism in the Metaxist mould,' Nick said.

There were no monuments to those from the losing side, except a slab in a village listing the names of children killed by mines, and one memorial to a young partisan, just before the Albanian border.

'Rainbow tried to put a small memorial at Mount Vicho [Vitsi] next to the existing one, commemorating the Macedonian fighters,' Nick said.

Rainbow was a political party in Florina, representing the ethnic Macedonian minority. Their offices had been set on fire several times in the past twenty years. The monument was defaced instantly, then destroyed. Today, the far-right Golden Dawn gather at the summit every year.

'Every time we come here, we swear it's the last,' Nick said, meaning northern Greece. 'It's like they're waiting for us all to die.'

'When you say *we,* who do you mean?' I asked.

Nick was quiet for a moment.

'Me and my mother,' he said. 'And my grandmother.'

Then he added: 'And my great-grandmother. 'Cause here's the

thing: it doesn't even end with death!'

When his great-grandmother died in Adelaide and the family asked the local Orthodox priest to do the forty-day service, he refused.

'Because he was Greek and we were Macedonian.'

He'd called them *Skopianoi*, a Greek slur targeting their neighbours whose capital is Skopje. Even when they were in Australia. This contempt had a history, though not a very long one. But it is precisely these relatively modern Balkan *agonies* that get written off as 'ancient hatreds'.

In the Kastoria of the early twentieth century, Henry Brailsford met a Greek bishop who told him that the town hospital was for Greeks only, and Muslims and foreigners at a pinch, but that he would rather see Bulgarian-Macedonian women and children die than be admitted. 'Because they are our enemy,' the bishop explained, an answer 'so frank, so primitive' that the author despairingly concluded Kastoria to be 'the home of lost causes'. Meanwhile, since the majority of people in the Florina district didn't speak Greek, the Greek bishop was obliged to conduct the church service in Turkish as a compromise – which strikes with its comical absurdity.

We drove through Kastoria, where fortunes were once made from fur-trading. Shop signs in Russian were everywhere: 'Fur coats at warehouse prices!'

'Cyrillic is fine if it signals Russian buyers, of course,' Nick said. 'No end to the ironies!'

The irony was living testimony to the relativity of cultural meaning. Culture is all about created context. Meanwhile, no one was buying anything much in poor, pretty Kastoria, where old people with defeated faces sold plastic items at street stalls.

An English officer, consul at Ali Pasha's court in Ioannina, passed through here in the early 1800s and described Lake Kastoria – frozen, with buffalo-driven carts moving over it. Despite the warmth of the day and the beauty of the scenery, I could see it frozen, blackbirds overhead and wolves howling in the valleys.

Like Lake Prespa, Lake Kastoria and its outlying mountain villages where the few people we met had sad eyes, lost siblings, and things they couldn't put into words, left us feeling stricken. 'I'm glad we're leaving tomorrow,' I said. 'There's something very heavy here.'

'Welcome to my world,' Nick laughed.

We didn't want to talk about illness, so as not to fall into that ancestral habit – we had both noticed that across the Balkans, ill health was a favourite topic of conversation and there was in fact a disproportionate amount of disease and early death – but a decade ago, in

his early thirties, Nick had been diagnosed with advanced cancer.

'And it's weird, but just hours after I got the diagnosis, my mother received a phone call saying her mother was about to die!'

His mother was trained in the catastrophic mindset, and here was catastrophe. When his grandmother died, the hearse arrived with a Greek flag on the bonnet. A war flag.

'The dynamics in the extended family have been a minefield of unresolved identity issues,' Nick said. 'Like an extension of the Greek Civil War. As if the war never ended.'

Family members were civil to each other, he said, but under the surface, tensions and the fear of association bubbled, which over time led to estrangement. It sounded familiar.

'My immediate family in Oz,' he said, 'by virtue of identifying as "Macedonian", were the black sheep of the extended family in Greece, with a constant underlying feeling that we were uncomfortable for the "Greek" family members. As if our very existence proved that they were not Greek after all. Rather than confront their self-made demons, they preferred just burying them.'

But how do you bury something that's alive? I asked about the health of his extended family.

'Outbursts of extreme neurotic behaviour, addiction, alcoholism, anorexia. And an extraordinary number of strokes at a young age.'

The struggle to own your name, your mother tongue and the letters of your alphabet, your past, your present, your children, the graves of your dead, to exist at all – this struggle, when passed down the generations undigested and further multiplied in a schizoid tug-of-war between cousins and siblings, is almost the definition of systemic illness. The entire system sickens.

This is a side-effect of 'Balkanisation', of the violent splitting into hostile entities of a complex matrix that cannot be divided any more than the child presented to King Solomon could be cut into two children. Nick, loyal Nick, had almost become the sacrificial victim of his family, by manifesting the collective disease in his body.

But his cancer had healed and he had been finally given the all-clear this year. To celebrate, he was travelling even more frenetically than usual. I kept wanting to tell him to sit still, be quiet for a moment, and stop looking up the latest news on social media. His restlessness infected me. It's as if he was constantly being engulfed by events and their consequences, and had no distance from anything.

But what about me? Even after years of retraining myself out of the feeling that good things only serve to invite catastrophe – despite my

university degrees, fluency in various languages, travelling the world – even then, in my ancestral brain, I was not that different from the man who walked backwards 'to trick the evil eye'.

On the bone-dry St. Achillius Island of Little Prespa, reached by a long scenic walkway from the western side of the lakelet, all that was left of Samuil's great episcopalian basilica was the beautiful curved wall with three window holes, and columns propping up nothing, witnesses that are perhaps just as well silent. And bullet holes, as if from many executions. In the days of Samuil, there had been a natural isthmus and the island may have been a peninsula. Even now, when the lake freezes over, as it would in the coming winter, the few children of the island walk to school across the ice, as if across frozen time.

In the midst of the fighting in the winter of 1948, this island had seen the wedding of Nikos Zachariadis to his comrade in love and war, Roula Koukoula – even if he had banned love for everybody else. He would hang himself many years later in exile in Siberia, after Roula betrayed him by voting for his excommunication from the Communist Party. They remained in an inner state of war to the ends of their lives.

Nick and I walked to the far end of the island, past the ruins of a monastery and a humble church with stirring frescoes. Hundreds of birds were scattered like crumbs over sky and water. But Little Prespa is changing fast – or fast in lacustrine time. The causes are human: the irrigation of the bean fields, which silts up the lake with unnatural speed. The bean fields are to Little Prespa what the apple orchards are to Big Prespa: deadly.

As the people of Prespa were driven away by war, the reedbeds – for centuries dwelling places for fishermen and their reed huts as well as sources of material for handmade goods – have been abandoned and are rapidly spreading, encouraged by the increased littoral mud. The shepherds whose livestock grazed the reeds and kept them under control are gone too. Until the 1960s, Little Prespa had water buffalo whose favourite food was reeds. Now, the spreading reedbeds nibble away at the wetlands, meaning less space for fish spawning, which in turn means fewer other species like waterfowl. After over a million years of self-regulation, it is twentieth-century war that may slowly kill Prespa, a process that has been underway for two generations now.

'The water plants are dying and decaying in the lake, which adds organic material, which in turn ages the lake and leads it a speedier death: turning into dry land,' writes the Prespan naturalist Giorgos Catsadorakis. 'The extreme old age of a lake manifests itself in what we call marshes,

swamps, and peat bogs. The corpse of a lake we call dry land.'

It was hard to imagine the death of Prespa, so far away in human time, but Little Prespa already showed the signs – the reedbeds were impenetrable forests inside the lake. Yet from our vantage point on the island, it looked like a place where nature, not man, would have the last word, where guano would always whitewash the ruins of our labours, where the illusions of empires and nations rightly come to the end of their road.

A Greek archaeologist who fell under the spell of Prespa began excavating the island in the 1950s. The inhabitants of the small fishing community of St. Achillius are probably descendants of Samuil's Prespa – soldiers and workers, some of whom he brought with his army after his invasion of Thessaly to the south, whence he also brought the relics of Achillius, a fourth-century cleric. It was here, in Samuil's church, that the archaeologist found the sarcophagi of Samuil, his son Gavril-Radomir and his nephew Ivan-Vladislav: three men of different temperaments whose fate had been war, finally in a state of peace.

In another excavation on the island, a medieval necropolis revealed that the dead had Charon's *obols* (coins) placed over their eyes – the fee to the ferryman for the journey across the Styx. Those who didn't have the obol would remain in limbo, forever wandering the psychic landscape.

Back on the mainland, we recrossed the isthmus between the two lakes, back to the east side of Little Prespa. Villagers on the run from the Civil War had escaped towards Albania along here with their children, dodging shells. British bombers dropped shells in an attempt to blow up the bridge at its western end in Koula, 'Tower', its name suggesting that this had been an old observation point on the lake, possibly used in Samuil's time and even during the Romans'. Locals still find unexploded shells around Koula when the water level is low.

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In the morning, in the mouth of the fish called Psarades, we said goodbye on the square by the reeds. Nick drove to Thessaloniki for his London flight, and I drove west into Albania.

A popular saying has it that *Makedonia* comes from *maka*, the Slavic for sorrow and strife. Of course, it isn't true – the 'barbarian' Makednoi are mentioned by Herodotus ten centuries before the Slavs arrived, and the root of the name is a word for 'high' or 'tall', as the apparently tall Macedons of antiquity were called Highlanders by the

Greeks in the south (though the word was pre-Greek). Yet in the emotional lives of four Balkan nations, *Makedonia* has come to mean sorrow and strife – and at times *agonia.* But also, survival against the odds. The emotional life of Greek Prespa was clearly out of sync with its official history – but on the other hand, history is also made going forwards because it is a living thing. From a certain point, it's up to the living, not to the dead, how history looks on the ground.

Only months later, in June 2018, this square by the reeds would witness a historic scene Nick and I wouldn't have thought possible, hereditary catastrophists that we are. The Greek and Macedonian governments would sign the Prespa Agreement, healing the rift of the last twenty-five years over the name 'Macedonia'. Or rather, of the last one hundred years.

Or rather, healing the surface of it; underneath, a chasm of discord and denial still gaped, maintained by both sides. Macedonia would agree to change its name to North Macedonia, and Greece would consent. The deal would be signed here by politicians with hopeful smiles, but the road ahead would be a turbulent one as nationalistic Greeks continued to rage at their neighbours and their government for using the word at all, and the Macedonians raged against *their* neighbours and their own government for reducing them to 'North'. When they were, *are,* here in the south too, still. But that is precisely what Greece had made taboo. Acknowledging the existence of a people who call themselves Macedonians and who are not Greeks, puts a dent in the 'biscuit-factory line of history' that goes neatly from Hellenic antiquity to Byzantium to the Macedonian Struggle and the modern Greek nation-state. All this might have been a lot easier, of course, had the manufacturers of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav Macedonian national identity not gone to such extremes as to render the Bulgarian connection taboo and to claim direct lineage from warriors over two thousand years dead, respectively. This is how they produced their own biscuit-factory line, characterised by that bathetic blend typical of all Balkan nationalism (and possibly of *all* nationalism) and which makes it so unsuited to actual life: pettiness and grandiosity.

Alexander would be pleased: his Macedon war goes on, though geographically much reduced.

Driving the roads of Greek Prespa, a line from a poem came to me, by the poet Yannis Ritsos who spent years on prison islands (first in the 1940s, then in the 1960s):

'The dead are increasingly in danger.'

This applies also to the unborn, surely. We must do things differently for their sake, if not ours. What was striking on that sunny June

day in Psarades the following year, when an addendum to history was signed, was that the two young prime ministers with tired smiles looked like cousins. And that – as with the Ohrid Agreement seventeen years before – it took a lake to imagine peace.

The Albanian border was my aim. My final destination was St. Naum Monastery. This journey was coming to an end. I needed to get back – not to Ohrid town, but to the Lake of Light. Prespa could be taken only in small doses, like medicine. To get to the Albanian border, I had to leave the lake again and for a long time follow a valley darkened by mountains, past comfortless Civil War ruins. Everything felt unstable, in time and space.

In Psarades the previous night, while eating dinner near the police station, Nick and I had started whispering, even though we were speaking English. After just two days, Greek Prespa had instilled paranoia in him, and resentment in me. I looked with mistrust at the cops with their ignorant swagger, and was all too ready to say to them, in a voice that wasn't mine: Do you have *any* idea how much these people have suffered! But what if the cops struck back with their own suffering? Prespa had taught me that their great-grandparents were probably exiles from Asia Minor, or poor pastoralists from Epirus, resettled here as part of the Hellenising of the lake's hinterland. What choice had they had in the matter? They too were survivors of history.

It was no good, out-suffering each other, passing the parcel of pain as in some Beckettian play – I'll bury you. No, I'll bury you first. My people are more ancient than your people. No, we were here first, we're the autochthonous ones. We've suffered the most. You? You have no idea what suffering means!

We had to get out of this ontological loop.

'It made sparkling sense that the vanquished, not the victors, should learn these secrets,' wrote the child narrator of *The Heroic Age* when he grew up. This raw and beautiful novel by Stratis Haviaras is set in Civil War Greece. The child narrator is trapped behind the andarte line at Grammes with thousands of other kids. After time in a prison island for minors, he emerges with a new, life-affirming perspective, and that is the secret of his psychic survival.

It struck me now why Nick and his mother kept returning to Greece, even though it hurt them so. It was precisely because there was no acknowledgement that Nick felt compelled to become a monument to his ancestors' lives. He came to represent those who had been erased. He was the ghost haunting the denied hinterland.

A month later on social media, I saw Nick on a potholed road deep in the mountains of south-west Bulgaria near the Greek border. He had gone to visit his maternal grandfather's village on the hundredth anniversary of his birth. Nick had retraced his grandfather's steps, returning for him, bringing back the errant spirit so that the howl would stop echoing in the ancestral landscape. He looked lonely on that godforsaken road, yet his expression said in no uncertain terms: Here I am. I made it.

But how many returns would it take? Will we know when to stop?

When I came across the term 'family homeostasis' to describe how families unconsciously strive to preserve the status quo, no matter how unhealthy, it made sense. Family homeostasis is the definition of moving on without moving on. In some families, it is embodied by a house. This is how inheritance issues grip generations in the name of invisible loyalty: the house becomes a mausoleum to the dead and the living alike. In our family, as in Nick's, after generations of emigrants there was no physical house for the spirits. We embodied them ourselves. In our maternal lines, the knowledge of loss and the fear of further loss had cast a deep shadow.

That was the dark force at our heels, the force that had manifested in mysterious pains, tumours, estrangements, and cellular anguish: the spectre of fear.

As with families, so with nations. The people of the lakes had been one people who, across time, borders and benighted policies, had become enemies. *Trauma* is Greek for 'wound'. A traumatic homeostasis had been preserved by ensuring that, at any given time, someone or something in the family – in the nation, in the region – was wounded, that pleasure was spoiled by someone wearing black at the head of the table, that a shard from some past wreckage was lodged in the circulatory system, and the crisis maintained.

We were all good people, of course. We meant well, felt deeply – and we were also unwitting servants of The Pain. This causes us cognitive dissonance that is so difficult with that we end up wilfully blind. Cognitive dissonance is when individuals or groups (such as nations) fail to reconcile their sense of being good people with the reality of having behaved destructively towards others, and themselves.

And here's the first infernal catch: we needed the relief of external justice before we could be well. We needed an apology, a commemoration, a gesture at least – from the State, from History, from the Patriarchy. From Europe, that Babylonian whore whose great powers had decided on the shape of our biographies for generations, from our men

who were absent or not perfect enough, from our mothers like Furies, from our children who ignored us, from the whole Earth that is witness to our suffering.

But here's the second infernal catch: what if relief didn't come, not even after one thousand seven hundred years? For me and Nick, time was running out, and illness had been a stark reminder. We had to set ourselves free – and by doing so, release our ancestors too. Nobody was going to do it for us.

Actions, events, even intentions leave a blueprint on Earth, because all is energy. In Prespa, the real source of my water dream, I finally grasped this – not just with the mind, for the mind alone can't accommodate all of reality, but at the energy level. Strife had seeped into the matrix, creating an imprint we, the distant children of this geography, picked up, in a cycle of reinfection. Along with the crystalline beauty which gave us a chance to rise above, transcend, do things differently. If we don't, the task will fall to those who live after us.

As with the private, so with the collective. It seems intolerably cruel, as well as fathomlessly stupid, that yet more conflict may visit the Balkans within my and Nick's lifetimes, but it is possible. We both felt it. War thrives on denial. And here, the necessary work of self-knowledge has not been completed. Self-knowledge is needed for reconciliation – that is, for lasting peace. Not more monuments to the 'winning' side, not more national martyrs, not more borders and armies. Just more kindness and more understanding. We should try to make peace for those who can't because they are trapped in the past. Even the young can be dead to the present, when sufficiently brainwashed by their elders. Cronos loves to devour his children.

Prespa, where I had no family history but where others' histories reflected my own, showed me this with absolute clarity. It is up to us to release ourselves from the cult of war. If we want a more peaceful world, we must learn peace ourselves. It's the hardest thing.

Seen from above, Ohrid and Prespa are a topographical image of the psyche – the light self and the shadow self, the conscious and the unconscious, linked through underground channels. Each contains the other without denying it, like a perfect yin and yang symbol. This is how they have survived as a self-renewing system for a million years.

Psyche is a Greek word meaning soul.

On a high road above Prespa, Nick and I had stopped to refill our bottles at a roadside water tap. We held a bottle to the spout but nothing came. It had dried up. I was reminded of the following story, told by a Greek man in

Children of the Greek Civil War. He was eight years old; it was during the war, and he'd gone into the hills to fetch water from the spring. But by the spring, the body of a soldier had just been dug up by wolves. Three women appeared by the body and began to intone a lament. The wolves howled in the hills.

The narrator was eventually evacuated to a *paedopolis*, in a journey that began at a crossroads above his village. Such crossroads were commonly called *anathema*, or damnation, because it was at crossroads that men left for twenty years and children were torn from their mothers. Those who stayed behind donned black and cursed through their tears: *Anathema se xeniteia*! Curses on you, foreign lands! He was well educated in the camp, but for the next forty years he'd have the same nightmare: he goes to a mountain spring but as soon as he bends down to drink, the atmosphere darkens and he wakes up. He can never slake his thirst.

Until one year, he returned to the childhood spring, and the full memory came flooding back. He had repressed it – the spring, the body, the wolves, the three lamenting Furies. He held a small ritual there, for the victims on both sides. The nightmare ceased.

CHAPTER TEN

THE CONCEPTION AND COMPOSITION OF *A WATERMELON, A FISH AND A BIBLE*[1]

CHRISTY LEFTERI

The themes arising within Cypriot post-colonial literature include a preoccupation with land, the emergence of a Cypriot identity, the questioning of dated and problematic political ideals. My novel has aspects of these ideas; the conflict between Greek and Turkish is a prominent theme in the novel, and the landscape of Cyprus is used to depict a variety of concepts about land, culture and division. However, my novel does not deal with Cypriotism in the same way. What I hoped to achieve, when I set out to write the novel, was something slightly different from post-colonial literature. Although identity politics and the reaction to colonisation are important aspects of the novel, it is not told from the perspective of the colonised dealing with the integration of modernisation. My aim instead was to depict the struggle from the perspective of all three nations involved and to show the effect of nationalism on the lives of these people. I wanted to portray the "monsters" of each nation.

My novel is not written from the mind of a writer who is looking back at a colonial past and considering the struggles encountered by the colonised and depicting this in fictional form. Rather, it is told from the perspective of a writer who has studied the colonial past of each of these nations and considered not only the struggles with identity, but the problems that occurred due to nationalism and imagined ideals which were triggered by struggles with identity. This is why presenting the above study was very important.

There are three narratives running through the story: the first is that of Adem and Serkan, the second of Richard and Paniko in London.

[1] This is an extract from Christy Lefteri's PhD thesis, "The Flame and the Sword: Cypriot Literature of Liberation considered from Post-Colonial, Psychological and Creative Perspectives", Brunel University, 2011.

The third Koki, Maroulla and the women in the prisoners' house. Each of these represents one of the three nations involved in the struggle: Turkey, Greece and Britain. Through Adem, we see the remnants of the Ottoman Empire; through Richard, the dying British Empire; through the women in the house, a reliance on Hellenic identity, creating prejudice and hatred. Koki is the point in the middle of this struggle: she is the hybrid, a mixture of these three empires, pasts and ideals. She, in a way, is the product of globalisation and of modernity that cannot be accepted.

A deeper exploration of each is necessary. In my novel, it is Adem, an outsider, who is able to break the divide between Greek and Turkish. Adem is a mainland Turk whose family have suffered the consequences of a fallen empire; the darkness of these times is depicted in the living room where his father struggles to keep a job writing eulogies for the local newspaper. In *Istanbul*, Orhan Pamuk writes about post-imperial melancholy and the effects of lost imperial greatness. He writes of living amongst great ruins and a community that is both in mourning and in poverty:

> …the melancholy of this dying culture was all around us. Great as the desire to Westernise and modernise may have been, the more desperate wish, it seemed, was to be rid of all the bitter memories of 3the fallen empire.[2]

Just like the residents of Istanbul who are grieving for a lost Empire, in *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible* Adem's father writes the names of the dead, crossing them off the list, as if erasing the past. His father is afraid to face the present, he remains enclosed in the safety of the living room, only staring at the glittering mosque from a distance, unable to let go of a vanishing past. Adem is afraid of being caught up in this stagnation and, when his father dies, he flees to Cyprus. There, however, he finds the residues of colonisation and becomes the target of hatred when he falls in love with Koki. However, Koki is not a normal Orthodox Cypriot girl, she represents the fraught relationship between colonised and colonisers, she is the product of an illicit affair between a Cypriot Orthodox woman and Richard, a British pilot based in Cyprus. She is the repressed truth of a multicultural past that cannot be faced by her own society. Her "hybridity" is given away by her red hair. The red is different, flame-like and also vibrant, representing the imposed newness and otherness of the colonisers, and the way this imposition was perceived as dangerous.

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[2] Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul*, p. 27.

The story does not deal with the hatred of the Orthodox Cypriot towards the British but instead presents Koki as a scapegoat of animosity by her own people; she is the monster, the enemy, medusa. The reason I created the character of Koki was to portray the notion that the enemies and monsters that the Cypriots feared were actually parts of themselves that they could not accept. I wanted to explore the idea of the scapegoat in relation to the shadow archetype, which I have already looked at in relation to the EOKA struggle, and how evil is created in people's minds. As I have established in my thesis, it is clear that the Orthodox Cypriots' notions of evil did not begin with the invasion.

Adem also becomes the subject of animosity and is attacked by the members of the Greek youth organisation who score his back with the Christian Cross. From this point Adem becomes the embodiment of these two cultures. He wears a Turkish moon pendant:

> 'Am I such a devil that I have to have Allah watching me from the front and Christ watching me from the back? I'm imprisoned between these two bars.' …his body shakes and he hunches with the weight of these two worlds.

Adem is well aware that he has been caught in the middle of this division, a division that is supported by each community's respective religious leaders, and he is scarred by this for life. He truly carries the burden of this division when he kills his own son, believing him to be the enemy. He is carried away by his own impulse to destroy. Without even choosing to, he carries the burden, not only of the Cyprus conflict but of the Greek-Ottoman and Persian conflict that goes back thousands of years.

Adem is a shoemaker, he makes shoes for people who travel the globe, and he tells stories about travellers of past-times; this is indicative of two paradoxical matters. On the one hand it represents the imperial cycle of the past, of finding new territory and expanding frontiers. On the other hand, it depicts the modern and emerging global environment. As Said puts it,

> …in the late twentieth century the imperial cycle of the last century in some way replicates itself, although today there are really no big empty spaces, no expanding frontiers, no exciting new settlements to establish.[3]

This covering of ground is presented in Adem's fascination with shoes and the soil that is found within the crevices. However, the world is changing.

[3] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 21.

Due to colonisation, different cultures have come together and Adem's isolation in the hut could reflect the void that is left in between, the place where these cultures meet but cannot be reconciled.

Adem is aware of his own community's imagined notions of nationalism; on the boat, on the way to Cyprus with the invading force, he doesn't take part in the other soldiers' conversations about the Greek Cypriot enemy. The soldiers' convictions are presented as unrealistic, showing how the truth can be distorted and thus playing with the idea of imagined nationalistic realities. The words used by the soldiers on the boat are a parody of nationalistic convictions, indicating how in fact other convictions, that may appear more realistic, might have the same foundation of untruth:

> The Turks do not have a mosque, they are forced to pray on their knees in the sun-starched fields and forced to eat grapes that have already fallen from the vines … and when they kill a cow the Turks are left with the carcasses…

There are a few examples like this of how the Turks view themselves as mistreated, indicating the belief systems that might lead to the justification of an invasion. Although these convictions seem ludicrous, the men are serious and this is evident when the final comment causes an eruption of laughter, as if this was the only unrealistic idea:

> 'And there is no nourishment for the children because the Greeks bathe in pools of milk and come out with skin as white as the moon.'
>
> 'That's ridiculous,' said one. 'Where would they ever find that much milk, there'd need to be cows as many as stars.'

However, Engin, like Adem, has a different awareness. He talks about his father's pawn shop and how things can change hands, how they can be passed from one person to another. This represents countries changing hands and people putting their mark on things; this perhaps is part of human nature both in small ways and in larger, global ways. Engin has a vague consciousness of this but he is destroyed. Adem notices that Engin has this awareness but it is only in the form of a "blank black picture where the reasoning of everyone else seems mad."

Adem cannot face the hatred and locks himself away. Although it appears that he has become his father, it is under much different circumstances. His father was mourning the loss of an empire; Adem, however, cannot find a place in a world, he cannot bring himself to belong to a particular community. This is also reflected in his love for Koki.

When Adem enters Cyprus with the invading force, he walks through the streets and remembers the town's people, both Orthodox and Muslim. There is a spiritual element to Adem's presence; he puts on the priest's shoes, showing his detachment from his own community. This may appear as though he has sided with the Greeks, especially as he keeps the Bible that he found on the floor in his blazer pocket, but it reminds him of the Koran. Within Adem, the two cultures come together. Initially I named him the Green Man. The Green Man is a pagan symbol of the earth. This seemed to fit with Adem's interest in shoes and the earth and would have also linked with Cypriotism's fascination with the land, as opposed to religious and cultural segregation and division. However, Adem is merely human, just like everybody else. In the face of danger, he shoots a Greek boy.

Richard's story deals with the fall of yet another great empire and also with the Cypriot immigrants of the 1950s. The question of identity, community and culture is an issue for the Orthodox Cypriots of the Diaspora, particularly those that fled in the 1950s. In a way it is here that the novel becomes more post-colonial.

A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible addresses the insecurities felt by these immigrants in a similar way to the characters in *The Lonely Londoners*.[4] Just like the West Indians in post-World War II London, the Greek Cypriots are the outsiders and they, too, are forced to form a group identity based on congregation. The Orthodox Cypriot immigrants meet at the café and, just like the characters in *The Lonely Londoners*, have to struggle with a sense of failed promise. The men spend their time in the café, they gamble, lose their money and the most prosperous of them all, the factory owner, spends his money on drink and prostitutes. There is unity in their experience, but at the same time a real sense of stagnation. The shop is full of Cypriot memorabilia, vases and pictures from Paniko's home town. However, like tourists, they use an ashtray with a picture of Cyprus; they are caught between two worlds, they are segregated, but in the café there is a sense of unity, of being "Greek" Cypriot.

This same sense of congregation is portrayed in *The Cypriot* by Andreas Koumi. When the main character visits a clothes-making factory owned by a Greek Cypriot, all the workers are Greek Cypriot and there is a sense of congregation, unity and at the same time stagnation within the walls of the factory:

[4] Sam Sevlon, *The Lonely Londoners*.

> That afternoon I found myself entering a factory off Green Lanes…row upon row of sewing machines were before me, each with its own woman hunched over it, I was reminded of how, during the harvest time in the old days, groups of women like this might go out into the fields together, pulling vegetables from the red earth. Then, it seemed, all they did was stoop and gather, chatter and joke, laugh and sing. Now they sat and sewed, gossiped and blamed, argued and complained. Meanwhile the rain pitter-pattered on the corrugated iron roof above them.[5]

The women in the factory have come together as they used to. In London there is unity in familiarity; however, the tone of their conversations has changed, there is a sense of bitterness which is fraught with anger. They are repeating aspects of the past, where they pulled vegetables from the earth. Even though their physical postures and tasks are similar, the singing and laughing has been replaced with arguing and complaining.

A comparison can clearly be made between the women in the fields and the women in the factories. The use of the words "then" and "now" portrays this significantly. It is interesting that the rain continues to "pitter-patter on the roof". Perhaps here the stillness of the scene becomes more evident; the women continue as they did in the past, while outside something different is happening.

In my novel, the café becomes a very significant centre for the exploration of past and present. Rebecca Bryant writes of the importance of the café during British administration. The café was an important centre of anti-colonial discourse:

> The men in their coffee houses claimed to speak for the people, at the same time seeking to define a consensus that would support their claims to authority.[6]

In my novel, Richard mentions that the Greek Cypriots have put lemon trees onto the landscape of Soho, bringing a part of Cyprus with them. The café inside is an isolated bubble, and Cyprus exists within its walls. When the men in *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible* find out about the invasion, a discussion ensues about outcomes and solutions. This is an echo of the past, of the time at the onset of British administration, when there was a different sense of unity and congregation, one that was nonetheless based on identity. Bryant writes of the cafés at the turn of the nineteenth century:

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[5] Andreas Koumi, *The Cypriot*, p. 46.
[6] R. Bryant, *Imagining the Modern, The Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus*, p. 17.

> At issue was the future - and by necessity the past. The men in their coffee houses wrote newspaper articles redolent of local concerns, canvassed the villages, giving speeches full of memorable, muscular rhetoric, and lobbied the laws that would better control the tendencies of a society that they assured themselves they knew.[7]

In this light it is easy to see the sad undertone in Paniko's café in Soho; it is a mere shadow of the former coffeehouses that were a platform for public reforms. Although the men start a passionate discussion, voicing their opinions as though they might be heard, a younger man, unconnected to the rhetoric of the past, born and educated in London, voices a different opinion: "Grivas is to blame for all this." Grivas here is a representation of the Hellenic discourse and reliance upon Hellenic identity. The men in the café are outraged and Paniko must put an end to the conversation with the threat of sending them home to their wives. This also suggests the power of the female voice as opposed to the masculine rhetoric of the past. The men have no voice outside the café, they leave like snails, leaving a trail of nostalgia. This makes them passive, unaggressive, downtrodden and degenerated. As a result, masculinity, power and activity are confined to the poker game that has no forward-moving purpose for any of them. The only man who seems to win any money wastes it on prostitutes, emphasising their sense of stagnation and the contrast between this café and the ones in Cyprus where the future of the island rested in the hands of the men.

> At the turn of the century, when Richter was conducting much of her ethnographic work, the men sitting together in the café were battling amongst themselves over modernization and national causes.[8]

Richard is a character who is caught in the middle of the discourse between colonised and colonisers. He remembers his grandfather's imperial notions and at first agrees with the idea that the Cypriots will be backward and primitive. These ideas adhere with notions of Orientalism as described by Edward Said. However, as he connects with the life of the people, he cannot hold onto this notion. Just like Koki and Adem, he gets to know people rather than ideas, something which many of the other characters fail to do.

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[7] Ibid., p. 17.
[8] Ibid.

The female prisoners rely on the Hellenic discourse. At first, the masculine message that began as a rhetoric in the coffeehouses at the start of the century, can be heard by the women as they are led by the soldiers to the prisoners' house. The song that they hear is in fact the Greek National Anthem. The song comes to them like a ghost from the past and stops abruptly as the men who are singing are killed by the Turkish soldiers. The song is a link to the Hellenic ideal and the women take this with them as they enter the house. The National Anthem sounds very much like the anti-colonial poetry; it is based on the *Hymn to Freedom*, a large poem written by Dionysios Solomos, a poet from Zakynthos. The poem was inspired by the Greek Revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman Empire. One of the lines of the song is,

> From the Greeks of old whose dying
> brought to Birth our spirits free.

The men who are singing this are about to be shot dead and therefore the spirit of nationalism will be released into an immortal space. I intended this to be an echo of the idealisms during the anti-colonial revolt. However, as the story progresses, these ideals are questioned and upturned; the women have to face each other, they must face loss, death and rape, but above all they must face their worst enemy, Koki – the woman who represents the Turk and Tory monster.

Old Maria is representative of the fight for self-determination, she has taken on the masculine element of the armed struggle, she is in fact described as being unnaturally strong and manly; her old age is held back by her inner fight. At the end of the story, however, when she kills Serkan, she suddenly sees before her, lying dead on the floor, a human being who could have been her son. In this sudden revelation, there is an echo of a multicultural, lost past. It is at this point that she sinks into old age. The struggle and the fight have died and what is left, as she sits on the chair and prepares for death, is a love of the land, of Cyprus. She is left with the memories of her own past rather than an imagined, idealised, collective past. Her last thoughts are of a personal nature; she is no longer part of a universal identity, she is finally herself, with the reality of loss, death, old age and frailty.

Koki represents the emergence of globalisation that develops through colonisation and imperial cycles. Said argues that colonisation, with its diasporic effects and its spreading of peoples and cultures, leads inevitably to globalisation. He writes:

> We live in one global environment with a huge number of ecological, economic, social, and political pressures tearing at its only dimly received, basically interpreted and uncomprehended fabric. Anyone with even a vague consciousness of this whole is alarmed at how such remorselessly narrow and selfish interests – patriotism, chauvinism, ethnic, religious, and racial hatreds – can in fact lead to mass destructiveness.[9]

Koki is caught in the middle of three nations, each of which is guided by its own narrow and selfish patriotisms. She is an amalgamation of British, Greek and Turkish, and at the same time belongs to none of these. As a result, she lives in an isolated zone of her society's making. In *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Robert Young explores the term "hybrid" and its meaning of denigration, suggesting the "blackening or sullying of a thing".[10] In this sense Koki represents the outcome of one aspect of colonisation:

> Hybridity as a concept came to prominence in the context of supremacist Eurocentric accounts of racial origins and racial distinction. In particular colonialism presented the proponent of racial separation with the disturbing scenario of racial interbreeding and intermarriage.[11]

Although this is from the perspective of the colonisers, the colonised appeared to have similar fears of racial interbreeding. In my novel Koki is a product of colonisation, she is a hybrid and her hybridity cannot be ignored or forgotten; she represents a changing environment which must be hated, on an island where diversity and multiculturalism could not be accepted. It is interesting to apply Homi Bhabha's theory to this character. Taking into account his idea that culture is never innate, but in fact is performed or learnt within society, this culture is also susceptible to the possibility of being appropriated "in a fashion that disrupts the claim that it is the specific property or the unique expression of a single community."[12] Koki, therefore, disrupts the certainty of the culture, the learnt dynamics and boundaries of that community; she is a threat and a disruption. Due to this, there is nowhere for her to exist apart from on her own, suggesting that there is no place in the political climate of her age which could accommodate a move towards integration and globalisation.

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[9] E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 21.
[10] R. Young, *White Mythologies*, quoted by Andrew Smith, "Migrancy, hybridity and postcolonial literary studies", p. 250.
[11] Andrew Smith, "Migrancy, hybridity, and postcolonial literary studies", p. 250.
[12] Ibid., p. 252.

The division of Cyprus and the events of the 1974 invasion are a microcosm of a larger destructiveness caused by national ideologies. Cyprus remains separated, the island is still divided. Perhaps it is a symbol of what is happening on a larger scale, a representation of the ongoing battle between East and West.

Conclusion

After studying Cypriot history and literature, the 1974 invasion of the island seems to have been the final element of the clash between Greece, Turkey and Britain. I chose to start the novel on the first day of the invasion as, in my opinion, the event was the result of the accumulation of past idealisms. The novel spans back three decades and two generations, slowly revealing prejudices and ideals that lead to the events of 20 July 1974. The research I conducted into the colonial past and the 1950s struggle informed the narrative of the novel.

Considering the paradoxes and questions about Orientalism and the British administration helped me to a better understanding of the prejudice and hatred that developed between Greek, Turkish and British elements. Exploring the Orthodox Cypriots' reliance on a Hellenic past paved the way for understanding the convictions of the Greek community and reasons for its polarisation.

Thinking carefully about the anti-colonial revolt from a psychological perspective helped me to develop ideas about the deeper insecurities and patterns of behaviour which led to this hatred and polarisation. This research was an indispensable part of my writing.

Studying the novels that were written after the invasion allowed me to see the development of Cypriotism and the preoccupation with the land. My scope was limited because of the lack of translated literature, especially that of post-invasion. As a child I spoke Greek before I learnt English; however, my ability to read and fully absorb the meaning of a text is limited. This was very frustrating as I had to rely on translated literature. However, I feel that even a flavour of the patterns evolving in this literature helped me to develop my own ideas. What I was interested in was not Cypriotism alone but the unique colonial story, the clash of three great imperial powers, something which has not been seen before in the colonial past of Britain. I believe that all this helped me to write a novel from these three perspectives, with the focal point being the effect of prejudice and nationalism.

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Chapter Eleven

"Bride of the Mediterranean":[1] Alexandria and the Greek Legacy in Modern Arab Culture

Robin Ostle

When the scientific and military personnel of Napoleon Bonaparte's Egyptian Expedition disembarked at Alexandria in 1798, the more learned members had some difficulty in reconciling the sights and realities they encountered with the city of Alexander which loomed large in their historical imaginations. What they found was an unprepossessing collection of crumbling buildings which housed approximately 8000 people in the most unpromising circumstances. And yet from such uninspiring beginnings, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw dramatic urban and demographic expansions: according to our best estimates, by 1865 the population of Alexandria had risen to 180,000 and this figure was close to 575,000 in 1927.[2] Such remarkable growth reflects the fact that Alexandria was both the symbol and an actual motor of the transformation of Egypt from a relative backwater of the Ottoman Empire to one of the most dynamic modern nation states in the Arab world.

Crucial to the growth and development of the city were the visions and strategies of Muhammad 'Ali (ruled 1805-1848) who seized power in the aftermath of the conflicts between the British and the French. He set about creating his modern nation state with the models of Western Europe very much in mind. The first major infrastructural project was the construction and dredging of the Mahmudiyya Canal which began in 1819 and when completed, extended from al-Mahmudiyya on the Rosetta branch of the Nile to the western port of Alexandria. This provided a source of fresh water for both irrigation and human consumption, but most important of all it created

[1] This is the affectionate term for Alexandria often used in Arabic.
[2] R. Ilbert, "De Beyrouth à Alger", p. 16.

a link with the hinterland from which the town had been largely isolated prior to the nineteenth century. Alongside the rail and road links, the canal remained a vital route to the port until at least the Second World War.[3] Military power was one of the overriding concerns of Muhammad 'Ali, and in the 1830s the newly established western port of Alexandria was the base for his naval arsenal and at this stage the city was essentially a garrison town. However, from the mid-nineteenth century, Alexandria developed more and more as a major commercial centre, thanks to the rapidly increasing exports of Egyptian cotton, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the growing participation of Egypt in the European colonial economies. These were the factors which created Alexandria's role as a major centre of Mediterranean cosmopolitanism in which the Greeks became the dominant non-Arab community. According to official censuses, by 1897 the total population of Alexandria was 319,766, of whom 46,119 were non-Egyptian. Of the latter, the Greeks were the largest community, numbering 15,182. By 1927, their numbers had risen to 37,106 out of a non-Egyptian population of 99,610, while the population of the city as a whole was 573,063. The Italians came closest in number to the Greeks of Alexandria – in 1927 there were 24,280 of them – but the Greeks remained the largest non-Egyptian Mediterranean community.[4]

An important factor in the development of this cosmopolitan port city was the creation of the Municipality of Alexandria in 1890 via which the non-Egyptian communities began to accrue special rights and statuses. These endured until 1937 when, as a result of the Montreux Convention, these Capitulations applying to the foreign groups were gradually discontinued. But in 1907, there were some fourteen non-Egyptian communities in Alexandria who, through their consulates, were able to benefit from legal and social privileges until the late 1930s.[5] They were not slow to establish their networks of schools, hospitals and social and cultural clubs. In addition to providing the various commercial opportunities referred to above, Mediterranean port cities such as Beirut, Alexandria, Tunis and Algiers served as refuges from the conflicts of nineteenth-century Europe and the increasingly disintegrating Ottoman Empire. Thus, it was that, alongside the indigenous populations in these cities, were created human patchworks of Greeks, Italians, Armenians, French, Maltese, Spanish and members of the Syro-Lebanese diaspora. It is hardly surprising that Greeks should have formed the majority of the non-Egyptian population of the modern city of

[3] R. Ilbert, *Alexandrie 1830-1930*, pp. 15-20.
[4] Ibid., pp. 757-761.
[5] R. Ilbert, "De Beyrouth à Alger", pp. 18-19.

Alexander, given its extraordinary history as the capital of Greek culture in the Eastern Mediterranean. Some forty years after its foundation in 331BC, Alexander's Ptolemaic successors established the Mouseion and its Great Library, probably inspired by Demetrius of Phalerum who governed Athens from 317 to 307BC, after which he was exiled to Alexandria.[6] In all likelihood the model which Demetrius had in mind was Aristotle's Lyceum in Athens, and thanks to the scholars and their unrivalled resources, Alexandria became the great centre of Hellenistic culture both in reality and in the imaginations of subsequent generations. Small wonder that Greeks should make it their major destination in the eastern Mediterranean in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thanks to the combination which it offered of commercial opportunity and port-city haven.

Hitherto we have concentrated on the history of the non-Arab populations of Alexandria in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but of course of the more than half a million inhabitants referred to in the 1927 census, the vast majority were Egyptian Arabs. In spite of the special privileges enjoyed by the non-Arab communities via the Capitulations, it would be wrong to suggest that they were in some way insulated or separate from their Egyptian Arab counterparts. This was particularly the case amongst the upper echelons of this cosmopolitan society whose members often moved in the same social and cultural circles, attended the same schools, and conversed in the most common *lingua franca* of the time which was French. While prominent writers such as Gaston Zananiri (1863-1956), Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888-1970) and of course Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933) are celebrated in their respective national literatures, they wrote and worked in that special Alexandrian urban context which they shared with their Arab counterparts. The pioneering Egyptian painter Muhammad Nagi (1886-1956) was a totally typical member of the upper echelons of cosmopolitan Alexandria in the early twentieth century. A privileged member of the Turko-Egyptian elite of Pashas and Beys, he was a pupil at the Swiss School where he was acquainted with both Ungaretti and Marinetti, and in common with many members of the Egyptian *grande bourgeoisie*, his higher education took place in European institutions: after studying Law at the University of Lyon (1906-1910), he continued until 1914 to pursue his primary passion for painting at the Fine Arts Academy in Florence.[7]

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[6] G. Dorival and D. Pralon, "Robert Ilbert et le paradigme alexandrin", pp. 95-96.
[7] R. Ostle, "Alexandria: A Mediterranean Cosmopolitan Centre of Cultural production", pp. 316-318.

Like most Egyptians of his generation, Muhammad Nagi was both profoundly affected by and deeply involved in the national enthusiasms which swept Egypt at the time of the 1919 Revolution which was followed by the establishment of the constitutional monarchy in 1923. A number of his paintings reflected the political excitements of these years. In 1922, he completed a large mural in the Hall of the Egyptian National Assembly entitled "Renaissance of Egypt", the Pharaonic motifs of which suggest that the new nation state was at a point of resurrection from which it could look forward to a new era of power and glory reminiscent of the Egypt of the Pharaohs. This mural shares the title "Renaissance of Egypt" with the iconic sculpture by Mahmud Mukhtar (1891-1934) which was unveiled in 1928 and today dominates the approach to Cairo University. Nagi's native city was the inspiration for one of his most famous works, "School of Alexandria". He began work on this around the time of the Montreux Convention, taking some ten years before it was completed, during which he produced a number of preliminary sketches and preliminary studies in oils. The finished work measures some 8 metres by 3 metres and is displayed in the main meeting hall of the Governorate of Alexandria. It is an expansive celebration of the variety of religious and cultural traditions which have created the history of Egypt, not the least of which was the legacy of Greece. It is also a clear reference by Nagi to the frescoes by Raphael which decorate the Stanze de Rafaello in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican, entitled the "School of Athens". The central background is dominated by a statue of Alexander the Great, while in the central foreground the figure of St. Catherine is flanked by Archimedes on one side, who is handing the heritage of Greek civilisation to the Islamic philosopher Ibn Rushd on the other. These three figures are surrounded in turn by a group of European and Egyptian writers and intellectuals: in the large scale completed work, both Ungaretti and Cavafy are depicted on the European side, while the Egyptians include the prominent Islamic reformer Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905), the sculptor Mahmud Mukhtar and the writer and academic Taha Husayn (1889-1973). The top left hand corner shows Ptolemy's Pharos, while the horizon consists of the waterfront of the eastern port. The preliminary study in oils shown here [Figure 1] retains most of the features referred to above, but not the full range of personalities contained in the final work in the Governorate of Alexandria.

Figure 1: Preliminary study for "School of Alexandria" by Muhammad Nagi

Photo Robin Ostle.

The iconography of "School of Alexandria" is the clearest indication that Muhammad Nagi's vision of Egypt's cultural history is powerfully Mediterranean and cosmopolitan, from Alexander the Great to the mixity of European and Egyptian intellectuals, writers and artists amongst whom he lived and worked.[8] This was a vision of Egypt's past and future that was shared by many of Nagi's contemporaries who came to occupy positions of power and influence during the period between the two World Wars. When the new University of Alexandria received its first cohort of students in 1942, its first Rector was Taha Husayn. In 1938, around the same time that Muhammad Nagi was beginning work on "School of Alexandria", he published his book *The Future of Culture in Egypt* in which he made clear that he saw Egyptian culture interacting with the diversity of European cultures around the Mediterranean. While he obviously recognised that the Arab-Islamic period was the latest and current phase in Egyptian history, important periods in the country's cultural heritage were the Pharaonic, the Greek and the Roman, and he was firmly of the view that Greek and Latin should have their place in the school curricula of Egypt.

[8] "Mixity": an anglicisation of the French sociological term "mixité" - the intermingling of peoples of different cultures.

Figure 2: Front Cover of *Apollo*, September 1934.

The first Professor of Bacteriology and Deputy Dean of the Medical Faculty in the new University of Alexandria was Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi (1892-1955), who, following his return from England in 1922 where he had completed his medical studies, worked in hospitals in Port Sa'id, Alexandria and Cairo, before establishing his principal residence in the Rue Menasce in Alexandria. Distinguished scientist though he was, Abu Shadi's lasting reputation is based on his contribution to the Romantic period of Arabic poetry during the decades 1910-1940. In 1932 Abu Shadi published the first number of a literary periodical, which, although short-lived, was the most famous of a number of literary journals published in the 1930s and which had similarly brief print runs. The title of this new journal was *Apollo*, and indeed the front covers of each number depict the Greek God of the sun and the patron of poetry and music [Figure 2].[9]

The journal was edited and often largely financed by Abu Shadi, its mission was to promote Arabic literature and the arts, especially poetry, and in September 1932 he also set up the *Apollo* Society to promote co-operation between writers both inside and beyond Egypt, thus adding an international dimension to the whole enterprise. As soon as the first issue of the journal appeared, it was immediately attacked by Abu Shadi's combative contemporary 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad (1889-1964) who deplored the fact that a publication devoted to Arabic literature and the arts should have such a "western" title as *Apollo*. The fact that Abu Shadi allowed al-'Aqqad space in the first issue to make his attack is a tribute to his broad-minded and liberal nature. Throughout the brief period of *Apollo*'s publication, this and similar controversies rumbled on, an indication that the cosmopolitan Mediterranean view of Egyptian culture promoted by Abu Shadi and his like-minded contemporaries was vulnerable to the attacks of those who espoused much less inclusive views of their national identity.

The publication of *Apollo* was quite an innovation in the history of Arabic literary journalism as it was unusual at that time to find a journal devoted entirely to literature, and to poetry in particular. Its nearest equivalent was perhaps *al-Funun* (*The Arts*) which had first appeared in 1913, not in the Arab world but in New York, and was a monthly journal published by and for the Syro-Lebanese poets and writers resident in that city at the time. Although *Apollo* was certainly innovative and progressive in the cultural context of its time, it did not pursue the iconoclastic approaches which were characteristic of genuinely *avant garde* publications. In spite of the attacks regularly levelled at the cosmopolitan nature of the journal and the *Apollo* Society, Abu Shadi continued to promote co-

[9] R. Ostle, "The *Apollo* Phenomenon", pp. 73-84.

operation between writers who often differed in their ideas and objectives, seeking to change the confrontational nature of literary discourse and criticism in the 1930s. In the leading articles which he wrote for the journal and also in the prefaces to his own collections of poetry, he deliberately evades the quarrels and factiousness which disfigured much of the literary criticism of his time, and promotes the liberal, inclusive approach to cultural issues which he shared with figures such as Muhammad Nagi, Taha Husayn, Mahmud Mukhtar and the other great Alexandrian painter of the inter-war period Mahmud Sa'id (1897-1963). In fact Abu Shadi was treading something of a tight rope in his mission to avoid confrontation but at the same time to introduce innovation into Egyptian and Arabic culture, all the time stressing the broad inclusive view of both its past and its future orientations. Frequently he used the pages of *Apollo* to inform and educate his readers through obvious attempts to widen their cultural horizons. In the issue of *Apollo* dated October 1932, he printed images of some of the nine Muses from Ancient Greek mythology, along with brief explanations of their roles. These included Polyhymnia, the Muse of sacred music, Urania, the Muse of astronomy and stars, Euterpe, the Muse of musical instruments and Erato, the Muse of Love and Love Poetry [Figures 3 and 4].

Although the Greek is a particularly dominant element within Abu Shadi's broad cultural vision, the other principal iconographic sources which appear in *Apollo* alongside ancient Greece are scenes from the Bible, Pharaonic Egypt, the European art of the Renaissance and occasionally some examples of contemporary Egyptian art. If one examines the collections of poetry which Abu Shadi published during the 1920s, particularly those which appeared from 1927 onwards, it is clear that the *Apollo* journal evolved directly from them in terms of their format and content. There are many illustrations in his collections of verse in which poems are frequently inspired by paintings which are reproduced alongside the texts. Abu Shadi displayed an almost Da Vinci-type mission to break down the barriers between literature and art, science, religion and philosophy, but of all the areas of creative activity through which he sought convergence with poetry, painting and the fine arts were the most important. A striking feature of many of the illustrations which adorn the pages of *Apollo* and his collections of poetry is the extent to which nudity seems to have been actively sought rather than subdued. The frequency with which the nude female form appeared either in the pages of *Apollo* or in the collections of poetry is remarkably unusual for the time. A typical example was the illustrated announcement of the publication of Abu Shadi's volume of poetry entitled *al-Yanbu'* (*The Spring*). This appeared in the February 1934 issue of *Apollo* and appears to depict a Venus-type figure stretching up towards the cascading spring waters [Fig. 5].

Figures 3 and 4: Images of the Muses, *Apollo* October 1932, pp. 120-1.

الهزلى . تراها واقفة وفى يدها اليمنى هامة مبتسمة وفى اليسرى هراوة الرعاة .

بوليمنيا — التهة شعر الحكمة الدينى

(٥) بوليمنيا (Polyhymnia) إلهـة الشعر الحكيم الدينى والفصاحة ، ولذلك تصور مفكرة معقوداً على رأسها اكليل من الغار .

اورانيا — التهة علم الفلك

(٦) أورانيا (Urania) عروس السماء وإلهـة علم الفلك ولذلك تمثل جالسة

اويتربه — الهة التلحين

(٧) أويتربه (Euterpe) إلهة صناعة التلحين والنفخ فى الناى ، والتوقيع على الآلات الموسيقية تراها مصورة وهى تنفخ فى مزمارين .

اراتو — الهة الشعر الغزلى

(٨) إراتو (Erato) إلهة الشعر الغزلى والنسيب وأناشيد الأفراح . وهى

Figure 5: Announcement of the publication of *al-Yanbu' (The Spring)*. Published in *Apollo,* February 1934.

In December 1934, *Apollo* finally ceased publication. The attacks had not abated and doubtless Abu Shadi had been wearied by this, along with the financial commitments for which he had remained largely responsible. Nevertheless, he remained proud of the fact that it had been such a significant motor of innovation in Arabic literature and culture, and had been a rallying point for the Arab poets of the Romantic movement both within and beyond Egypt. Much of this innovation had been driven by the multi-cultural nature of the *Apollo* enterprise through which this extraordinary Alexandrian insisted that, alongside the Arabic and Islamic heritage of Egypt, the Pharaohs, the Greeks and other Mediterranean Europeans had their place. The demise of *Apollo* and all that it represented was undoubtedly one of the early signs that the cosmopolitan culture of the "Bride of the Mediterranean" was approaching the decades of its twilight.

The impact of the Greek legacy on the modern Arab culture of Alexandria was at its most pronounced in the 1930s, before the advantages conferred on the non-Arab communities by the Capitulations began to wane, and Egypt's "liberal experiment" was overtaken by the dramatic political changes of the 1950s. In 1934 the painter Muhammad Nagi founded the Atelier of Alexandria which became a focal point for the artistic, literary and intellectual activities of the elites of the city, both Arab and non-Arab alike. In this enterprise he had the close collaboration of Gaston Zananiri and other members of the cosmopolitan intelligentsia. But even in more contemporary times, the ancient cultures of the city remain powerful sources of inspiration. An outstanding example of this is the work of Edwar al-Kharrat (1926-2015). Born in a Coptic family, he was a member of the first cohort of students in the University of Alexandria, from which he graduated in law in 1946. After the publication of his first collection of short stories in 1959, he went on to become one of the most outstanding writers in Egypt and the Arab world, and can justly claim to be the father of Egyptian literary modernism. Although he moved to Cairo in the 1950s, Alexandria remained the core of his work. In his writing the city is much more than a mere setting or background; it is a vital component of his creativity. Time is one of al-Kharrat's major artistic preoccupations, and this is anything but a linear progression. In his two haunting novels, *City of Saffron* (English translation 1989) and *Girls of Alexandria* (English translation 1993), both of which have powerful autobiographical features, the author explores not so much his memories as the workings of memory. In dream-like sequences the contexts merge from the ancient past into the recent past and present and even the future. He explains this technique in his work as follows:

> The category of *time* is denied and refuted, the problematic of temporality and eternity ceases to be posed, their very relation is denied; there is no more of the perennial and the ephemeral. The absence of temporality is the key concept of my fiction, or at least that is what I believe, because therein lies a major characteristic of Alexandria.[10]

This insistence by al-Kharrat on the constant conjunction of the Absolute with the Temporal or the Transcendent with the Immanent, springs from the Neoplatonism of the Alexandrian philosopher Plotinus (204/5-270) and also from the Monophysite beliefs of the Egyptian Coptic Church, but more pertinently for him as the modern Alexandrian author, it is the defining characteristic of the city itself where past and present are continually interwoven:

> They have grown like the vine, my love's passions, in Alexandria my great city, God-preserved harbour, golden haven, vision of Alexander and work of Sostrates the mighty engineer, pearl of Cleopatra the eternal beauty, shining marbled city which at night needs no illumination so white is she; academy of Archimedes, of Eratosthenes the philosopher, of the poets Apollonious and Callimachus, dwelling of all the Muses, capital of sanctity and profanity, land of St. Mark, St. Ananius and the founders of the Bucolic Church, of Origen and Dionysius and St. Athenasius who stood prophet-like alone with the truth in the face of all the world……..Alexandria, O Alexandria, rampant sun of my childhood thirst of my boyhood and beloved of my youth.
>
> I said: Do you still dream of perpetuity, of that which surpasses eternity?
>
> I said: Do you not see that this is an evil dream, that no good will come of it?
>
> I said: No.[11]

The years of the Second World War in a surreal manner prolonged the vision of Alexandria as a centre of international mixity, enhanced by the influx of many thousands of military personnel from all parts of the British Empire and occupied Europe. Inevitably their presence created innumerable and exaggerated scenes and centres of pleasure and entertainment. But the 1950s ushered in the downfall of the discredited monarchy in 1952, and the increasingly strident tones of Arab nationalism. 1956 was a defining moment, the year which saw the nationalisation of the Suez Canal proclaimed in his native city by the Alexandrian Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, an event which led to the ensuing ill-fated invasion by the British, the French and the

[10] E. al-Kharrat, "Mon Alexandrie", p. 22.
[11] E. al-Kharrat, *Girls of Alexandria*, pp. 73-74.

Israelis. al-Kharrat records his own farewell to the friends and acquaintances from his adolescence and youth, amongst whom the Greek names figure prominently:

> After 1956, they all left, nearly all of them, for Athens, Rome or Marseilles: Yvette Sassoon and Marcel Sadduq, Stepho Orphanides, Despina Stamatopolo, Rita and her husband Pissas, Anastasia and her husband Dimitri Campanis, tough old Maria Simonides, Janine Birkowitz, Madeleine and Miryam and Antonine and Odette and Arlette. But George Skiryanides refused to leave. I saw him in the late seventies. He was coming out of the billiard hall in *shari'* Safiya Zaghlul. It was summer and he was in short sleeves, he had a brisk old man's walk.[12]

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CHAPTER TWELVE

İZMIR, 1922: A PORT CITY UNRAVELS

REŞAT KASABA

On 9 September 1922, the people of İzmir woke to an eerie silence. The last of the Greek army that had occupied the city since 14 May 1919 had withdrawn in the early hours and the Turkish army was expected to arrive at any moment. Tens of thousands of Greeks and Armenians who had been pushed toward the city from the interior had been massing on the waterfront for several days; they were desperate to leave before the arrival of the nationalist troops. The Turkish army entered İzmir later that morning, capturing the most valuable prize of their difficult campaign against the Greeks.

Nobody knew what to expect from these poorly trained, poorly fed, but fiercely determined fighters. The scorched-earth tactic the Greek army had used in its retreat from the interior made the Christians fearful that the Turks would now retaliate by destroying İzmir and persecuting its inhabitants. By the end of the day there were already rumours of attacks on the Greek and Armenian properties, sporadic looting, robberies, rapes, and murders. This apparent deterioration of public security led to panic, especially among the non-Muslim and foreign residents of İzmir. Some among them tried to hide; others attempted to flee, and the mass of people on the waterfront continued to grow. Ernest Hemingway, who was travelling in the Balkans as a war correspondent for the *Toronto Star*, wrote a short story called "On the Quai at Smyrna", describing the horror on the İzmir pier:

> The strange thing was. . . how they screamed every night at midnight. I do not know why they screamed at that time. We were in the harbor and they were all on the pier and at midnight they started screaming. . . The worst . . . were the women with dead babies. You couldn't get the women to give up their dead babies. They'd have babies dead for six days. Wouldn't give them

> up. Nothing you could do about it.[1]

Unbearable as these conditions were, they would get even worse on 13 September, when a fire started in the Armenian district and quickly spread, consuming large parts of İzmir. Now, squeezed between the fire and the sea, the refugees literally had no place to flee. British journalist Price Ward described the scene this way:

> What I see as I stand on the deck of the *Iron Duke* is an unbroken wall of fire, two miles long, in which twenty distinct volcanoes of raging flames are throwing up jagged, writhing tongues to a height of a hundred feet. Against this curtain of fire, which blocks out the sky, are silhouetted the towers of the Greek churches, the domes of the mosques, and the flat roofs of the houses. From this intensely glowing mass of yellow, orange, and crimson fire pour up thick clotted coils of oily black smoke that hide the moon at its zenith. The sea glows a deep copper-red and, worst of all, from the densely packed mob of many thousands of refugees huddled on the narrow quay, between the advancing fiery death behind and the deep water in front, comes continuously such frantic screaming of sheer terror as can be heard miles away.[2]

Many people who were trapped on the quay got into boats or jumped into the water, trying to reach one of the 21 allied warships docked in the harbour.[3] Others sought safe haven in one of the consulates, foreign schools, or other public buildings that were associated with İzmir's expatriate community. One of the survivors who took refuge in the Smyrna theatre that had become the U.S. headquarters would later remember the "grim humour in the sign over the arched door in black letters two feet high. It was the name of the last movie shown: *Le Tango de la Mort.*"[4] None of these places was particularly welcoming, especially toward those whose citizenship status was not clear – which, unfortunately, was the case for many of the city's residents. They were turned away, sometimes by force. The Allied states whose ships were in the harbour and whose representatives were in town had not yet articulated a clear policy regarding the new developments in Asia Minor.

On 16 September, the nationalist forces arrested most of the male refugees between the ages of 18 and 45 who were on the pier and issued an

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[1] Ernest Hemingway, "On the Quai at Smyrna", *The Short Stories* (New York, 1995), pp. 87-88.
[2] Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor* (London, 1973). p. 310.
[3] Marjorie Housepian, *The Smyrna Affair* (New York, 1966), p. 86.
[4] Ibid., p. 161.

ultimatum that unless the foreign ships evacuated the people on the quay by the end of the month, they too would be arrested, forced back into Anatolia, and put to work in clearing the debris and rebuilding the towns and cities in the interior.[5] The dismal state of relations among the communities and the apparent determination of the Turkish government to make good on its threat accelerated the armistice negotiations. On 24 July 1923, the new Turkish regime signed a peace settlement with the European powers in Lausanne, Switzerland, ending one of the most ruinous chapters in the history of the eastern Mediterranean.

In one of its most controversial clauses, the Lausanne treaty barred the return of the refugees who had left Anatolia during the war and stipulated the exchange of the remaining Greek Orthodox residents of Turkey for the Muslims of Macedonia and western Thrace.[6] The implementation of this measure caused considerable confusion and pain on both sides of the Turco-Greek divide. For one thing, it was by no means clear as to who would be included in this compulsory exchange. For example, both the Turkish-speaking Anatolian Greeks *(Karamanlis)* and ethnic Arabs whose religion was Greek Orthodox were deemed "deportable", even though none of them spoke Greek and they had little knowledge of and no affinity with the kingdom of Greece.[7] So ambiguous was the status of the *Karamanlis* that, although the Greek delegate at the Lausanne negotiations referred to them as the "Turkish speaking persons of the Orthodox faith", his Turkish counterpart described them as "Orthodox Turks".[8] In the end, almost all the *Karamanlis* were resettled in Greece, where they initially suffered discrimination and harassment on the grounds that their Greekness and Christianity were suspect and that they were "baptized in yogurt".[9] Most of the Greek Orthodox Arabs, by contrast, moved to the areas under Syrian mandate to avoid deportation.[10] In Greece, too, this stipulation was initially interpreted in a very broad and confusing way to include not only Turkish-speaking Muslims of Thrace and Macedonia but also Albanians, on the

[5] Bilge Umar, *İzmir'de Yunanlilarin Son Günleri* (Ankara, 1974) p. 333.
[6] For a full text of the Lausanne Treaty, see Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey,* no. 1, 1923, *Lausanne Conference* (London, 1923), pp. 817-28.
[7] On the *Karamanlis,* see Richard Clogg, "Anadolu Hristiyan Karindaşlarimiz: The Turkish-Speaking Greeks of Asia Minor," in *Neohellenism*, ed. John Burke and Stathis Gauntlett (Canberra, 1992), pp. 65-91; Stephen Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey* (New York, 1932) p. 378. On Orthodox Arabs, see ibid., 383.
[8] Clogg, "Anadolu Hristiyan Karindaşlarimiz", p. 65.
[9] Ibid., pp. 66, 83.
[10] Arnold Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey,* 2nd ed. (London, 1923), p. 242.

grounds that they were Muslims.[11]

Along with about 190,000 refugees who fell under this treaty, more than 1.2 million Greeks left Asia Minor between 1912 and 1923. About 400,000 Muslim Turks were forced to make the opposite journey during these years and settle in the lands and homes left behind by departing Greeks.[12] The relative importance of these numbers can be appreciated if we remember that in 1922 the population of Greece was only about 4.8 million and that of the Ottoman Empire had declined from 20 million in 1906 to 18.5 million in 1914. In other words, through the wars and the exchange, Turkey lost 6 to 7 percent of its population; Greece was faced with a flood of refugees that equalled over a quarter of its population.[13]

The impact of this ethnic engineering on İzmir was particularly far reaching. According to a census conducted by the Ottoman government, the population of the city in the 1880s was about 208,000: 80,000 Muslims, 54,000 Greeks, 15,000 Jews, 7,000 Armenians, and 52,000 foreigners. In other words, at that time, roughly 60 percent of the city's residents were non-Muslims and foreigners.[14] Between the early 1880s and 1914, İzmir absorbed a large number of migrants and refugees. European sources put the city's population at 300,000 on the eve of World War I, whereas the Ottoman sources estimated it to be 211,000, with an ethnoreligious breakdown that continued to give non-Muslims a plurality.[15] In 1927, the first census of the new republic found that there were 184,254 people living in İzmir, 88 percent of whom were classified as Muslims.[16] Based on these numbers, and by taking into consideration the immigrations to İzmir during the war and the resettlements under the terms of the Lausanne treaty, we can assume that between 1914 and 1927, İzmir lost close to half of its population

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[11] Ladas, *Exchange of Minorities,* pp. 377-78.

[12] Ibid., pp. 437-42. This period as a whole was one of considerable mobility for the population of western Anatolia. Following the establishment of their special surveillance organisation, Teşkilat-I Mahsusa, in 1914, the Young Turk governments expelled over 98,000 Greeks from western Anatolia, but not from İzmir and other large cities. Most of these people returned during the Greek occupation to be deported again under the terms of the Lausanne Treaty. Engin Berber, *Sancili Yillar: İzmir, 1918-1922* (Ankara, 1997), pp. 58-61.

[13] Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 190; George Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 186-87.

[14] Karpat, *Ottoman Population,* pp. 122-23.

[15] Çinar Atay, *İzmir'in İzmir i* (İzmir,1993), p. 213; Karpat, *Ottoman Population,* p. 174.

[16] *Umumi Nüfus Tahriri* (Ankara, 1929), pp. ix, 36.

and an overwhelming majority of its non-Muslim residents.

The violent separation of the Greeks and Muslims of Asia Minor from each other in these years represents one of the most important turning points in the region's history, second, perhaps, only to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks four and a half centuries earlier. Yet despite the very large number of people involved and the huge disruptions it caused in the region, we seldom think about the radical shift that must have taken place in the minds of the people as they planned, instigated, and participated in this momentous shuffle. We forget that the communities that were separated in 1923 had been living together for centuries and that even those people boarding ships in İzmir and elsewhere would not have dreamed that their departure would be permanent. Rather than exploring these topics, what passes as analysis of these events is usually limited to justifying the tragedy from the Turkish side or lamenting it from the Greek or Armenian perspective.

To the Turks, 9 September 1922 was liberation day for İzmir, the crowning event in their successful war of deliverance from the occupying Greek and Allied Forces. School children in Turkey learn nothing of the forced migration of millions of people; instead, they read the celebratory accounts of how "the enemy" was "dumped into the sea".[17] Official versions of history insist that there was no deliberate persecution of Greeks and Armenians under Ottoman rule and that the difficulties these communities faced during the war were unavoidable because of the chaotic circumstances of those years. Some on the Turkish side even suggest that Greeks and Armenians were partly to blame for some of their misfortune because of their equivocal stand toward foreign invasion at the end of World War I and the outright treachery of some of the Greeks during the occupation years.

What Turkish nationalists see as a triumph was, of course, a catastrophe for the Greeks. In 1922, the Greeks were forced to abandon one of the oldest centres of Hellenic civilisation in Asia Minor and leave a city and a region that had become a site of great commercial prosperity. The waves of refugees from Anatolia presented a heavy burden on the small state of Greece and the problems associated with settling these families remained unresolved for most of the 1920s.

In the grecophile accounts of these disasters, part of the blame goes to the misguided policies of the Greek government and part of it to the wavering policies of the Great Powers. There is no doubt, however, who was

[17] For a preliminary comparison of school books in Turkey and Greece, see Herkül Milas, "İlkokul Kitaplari" in *Türk Yunan İlişkilerine Bir Önsöz: Tencere Dibin Kara* (Istanbul, 1989), pp. 34-48. Sec also the essays in *Tarih Eğitimi ve Tarihte Öteki Sorunu,* ed. Türk Tarih Vakfi (Istanbul, 1998).

responsible for the material, physical, and spiritual losses and pain the Greeks and Armenians of western Anatolia suffered: "The destruction of Smyrna happened, however, in 1922, and no act ever perpetrated by the Turkish race in all its bloodstained history, has been characterized by more brutal and lustful features, nor more productive of worst forms of human sufferings inflicted on the defenseless and unarmed",[18] wrote George Morton, the American consul-general in İzmir and a man known for his deep Greek sympathies.

The two sides have such diametrically opposed perceptions of those fateful years that even the accounts of well-known events for which there is ample eyewitness testimony do not agree with each other. For example, in describing the fire that left İzmir in ruins, the Greek and Armenian survivors report having seen "Turks taking bombs, gunpowder, kerosene and everything necessary to start fires, in wagon-fulls … through the streets" in the Armenian district.[19] Pro-Turkish accounts, by contrast, either ignore the whole episode or claim that the Greeks had severed "all the rubber pipes of the fire brigade"[20] or that "actual culpability has never been proved"[21] or that "there was in fact not one fire, but many", some of them set by Christians, some by Turks,[22] or that "any description of uniformed Turkish soldiers lighting fires in the city … may be assumed to be part of the fire-fightings rather than incendiary attempts."[23]

Before the Fire: The Myth of the Millets

Whatever the sympathies of their authors, most explanations of ethnic conflict in the Middle East start with the millet system, that is, with the notion that Ottoman society had consisted of neatly demarcated communities (called millets), each with a distinct language, culture, and religion, and living and working in separate neighbourhoods or villages. Even though histories sympathetic to the Greek or the Turkish perspectives use the notion of the millet as representing a prototype for a primordial understanding of nations, they differ in their perceptions of the relationship between the Ot-

[18] George Horton, *The Blight of Asia* (Indianapolis, 1926), p. 112.
[19] Housepian, *The Smyrna Affair,* p. 141.
[20] Halide Edip, *The Turkish Ordeal* (New York, 1928), p. 386.
[21] Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1977), p. 363.
[22] Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-92,* (Princeton, 1995), pp. 291-92.
[23] Heath Lowry, "Turkish History: On Whose Sources Will It Be Based? A Case Study on the Burning of İzmir," *Osmanli Araştirmalari* 9 (1988): 13.

toman state and these communities.[24] The Turkish versions project a benevolent image of the Ottoman administration as a system of rule that gave its subject people considerable autonomy to practice their religion and maintain their cultural habits and characteristics.[25] In this perspective, through the institution of millets, the Ottoman state becomes responsible for protecting and preserving non-Muslim religions and cultures in their domains. For Balkan historians, by contrast, millets were the depositories not only of the essential characteristics of each community, but also of the tremendous resentment these communities felt for their suffering under the "Turkish/Muslim yoke" that had oppressed them for centuries.[26] Although they stand at opposite ends of an interpretive spectrum, both of these versions seem to suggest that centuries of cross-community relations had not affected the essential characteristics of these millets in any significant way.

What gets lost in these competing explanations and claims is the fact that as an administrative category the millet dated back only to the middle of the nineteenth century.[27] Before that Ottoman society had resembled a kaleidoscope of numerous, overlapping, and cross-cutting relations and categories more than it did a neatly arranged pattern of distinct elements.[28] In addition to the *Karamanlis*, in Anatolia there were Armenian-speaking Greeks who used Greek letters to write Armenian; in Istanbul, there were Greek-speaking Jews who used the Hebrew alphabet to write Greek and Greeks who spoke Ladino.[29] Turkish novelist Halit Ziya attended a Catholic school that was established by Spanish priests, where he was

[24] Pandey argues that in Indian historiography the notion of "community" is reified in a similar way and used misleadingly as a precursor of the "nation". See Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi, 1992), pp. 1-22.

[25] See for example, Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, Introduction, in their edited volume, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society: The Central Lands* (New York, 1982), p. 1.

[26] See for example, L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York, 1961), pp. 96-115.

[27] For a background and discussion of the implications of the millet institution, see Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the Millet System", in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire,* ed. Braude and Lewis, pp. 69-88; Daniel Coffman, "Ottoman Millets in the Early Seventeenth Century", *New Perspectives on Turkey* 11 (Fall, 1994): 135-58.

[28] See Halil İnalcik, "The Meaning of Legacy: The Ottoman Case" in *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. Carl Brown (New York, 1996), p. 24.

[29] Clogg, "Anadolu Hristiyan Karindaşlarimiz," pp. 67-68.

assigned a geography book written in Turkish with Armenian letters.[30] The idea that these communities could be easily identified, separated from each other, moved, and relocated across long distances contradicted both the actual conditions and the worldviews and expectations of the people who became the subjects of these policies.

Most of the Greeks expected their departure to be temporary, both in 1914, when they were relocated by the Young Turks, and in 1923, when they were exchanged. In September 1922, in the days, if not the hours, before they left the pier in İzmir, some were still negotiating to buy property in the interior,[31] and some of the ailing refugees were seeking reassurance that their bones would be sent back to be interred in Anatolia should they die abroad.[32]

To be sure, whether somebody was Muslim or not was a very important criterion in the stratification of Ottoman society and, when all is said and done, non-Muslims were considered the second-class citizens of the state. But religion was only one of the markers Ottomans used to categorise their subjects. They also referred to ethnicity, tribal ties, Sufi affiliations, occupation, and nomadism when identifying their subjects. These categories changed, overlapped, or cut across each other, and the Ottomans did not consistently favour any one of them over the rest. Their approach was much more flexible. For example, in earlier centuries, nomadism was central to the achievements of the state, and hence nomadic tribes were at the centre of the empire's initial organisation. But after the sixteenth century, as the establishment of a bureaucratic administration became the central concern of the state, nomadic tribes found themselves at the receiving end of some very harsh treatment, especially if they resisted settlement.[33] Underlying this administrative flux was a social fluidity that allowed people to convert, settle down, join or quit Sufi orders, move in and out of cities (with the exception of Istanbul), and combine nomadic and sedentary forms of agriculture. To make matters more complicated, some of the converts, such as the *dönmes* (from Judaism) and "crypto-Christians", were never completely accepted by the Muslim community as genuine believers. Some of these communities led a dual life well into the 1930s, fulfilling all the requirements of their former religion in addition to the new

[30] Halit Ziya, *Uşakligil Kirk Yil* (Istanbul, 1987), p. 119.
[31] Dido Sotiriyu, *Benden Selam Söyle Anadolu'ya* (Istanbul, 1989), p. 203.
[32] Berber, *Sancili Yillar*, p. 72.
[33] See Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanli İmparatorluğunda Aşiretlerin İskâni* (Istanbul, 1987); Xavier de Planhol, "Geography, Politics, and Nomadism in Anatolia", *International Social Science Journal* 11, no. 4 (1959): 525-31.

one.[34] In cities like İzmir, walls did not separate neighbourhoods, and there was nothing in either the daily lives of the people or the administrative codes of the empire that required, enforced, or reinforced residential segregation.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the changing conditions in the eastern Mediterranean made the straightforward application of ethnic and national categories even more difficult. Starting in the 1830s, the region's trade grew several times over, and İzmir became firmly established as a major Mediterranean port placed at the centre of a vast commercial network that extended outward to other sites in Europe and inward toward the sites of cultivation and production in its hinterland. These conditions of economic expansion entailed the even closer interaction of people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. From rural farms to European ships, at every stage of the activity that prepared İzmir's exports, any one of the region's many ethnic religious groups or foreigners was equally likely to be involved. A similar chain that included an equally diverse and increasingly wealthy group of participants conveyed the region's imports into the interior.

İzmir benefited from the expanding economy of western Anatolia to a much larger extent than did the other cities of the interior. The city's wealth helped support a robust cultural life where "it was always possible to catch an Italian opera or a French operetta, or comedy or tragedy troupes performing on the waterfront in these languages."[35] In 1852, İzmir had six newspapers in five different languages. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the city supported 17 printing houses and one of the earliest public theatres in the Ottoman Empire.[36] In addition to its economic good fortune, İzmir also benefited from being far from Istanbul and hence relatively free of direct government control, especially of the stifling censorship that characterised Sultan Abdülhamid's reign.[37]

On all levels and in all occupational groups, western Anatolian society was diverse. It became even more so in the course of the nineteenth century. There were Greek and Turkish peasants, non-Muslim and Muslim merchants, Muslims who worked for foreign banks and for the Public Debt Administration,[38] Greek bandits who kidnapped Muslim notables, Muslim

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[34] On "Crypto-Christians", see, R. M. Dawkins, "The Crypto-Christians of Turkey", *Byzantion* 8 (1933): 247-75.
[35] Ibid., pp. 136-37, 238, 239.
[36] M. A. Ubicini, *Letters on Turkey*, pt. 1*: Turkey and the Turks* (New York, 1973), pp. 249-50; Tuncer Baykara, *İzmir Şehri* ve *Tarihi* (Izmir).
[37] Housepian, *The Smyrna Affair*, p. 91.
[38] For example, for a while, the only Muslim employees of the İzmir branch of the Ottoman Bank were the distinguished novelist Uşakligil and Atatürk's future father-

notables who supported Muslim bandits, Muslim bandits who kidnapped Muslim notables, and Muslim bandits who sought the mediation of Levantine residents when they got into trouble with the state.[39]

The municipal council of İzmir, created in 1868, provides a good example of the degree to which the various ethnic and religious communities had become intertwined in the nineteenth century. The council had 24 members: six Muslims, five Greeks, three Armenians, one Jew, and nine foreigners. Even the executive council that was to oversee the day-to-day affairs of the city had two Muslim and two non-Muslim Ottoman members, and four foreigners.[40] Associations such as the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* (Red Crescent Society), Sporting Club, and the Association of Turkish and Greek Journalists maintained an ethnically mixed membership throughout the period of the Greek occupation.[41] Even some of the bands of brigands were multiethnic in composition. One such band captured in 1919 had 21 members: nine Greeks (five Ottoman, four from Greece), six Turks, and two Armenians.[42] At the end of May 1919, the commander of the Greek army was met on the outskirts of the town of Ödemiş by a joint Muslim-Christian delegation pleading with him not to enter the city.[43]

İzmir's fire brigade was underwritten by the London Insurance Company and included both non-Muslim and Muslim firefighters. During the great fire, some from this brigade confronted the Turkish troops and accused them of torching the buildings while the firefighters were trying to put out the flames – to which a soldier responded "You have your orders and I have mine".[44] According to one contemporary account, on 10 September "the Turkish Military Governor, learning that there were still twelve Greeks in the fire department, ordered their immediate expulsion and arrest."[45]

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in-law Muammer Bey. (Uşakligil, *Kirk Yil,* pp. 320-23). Among the employees of the İzmir branch of the PDA was Abdulhalim Bey, who served briefly as acting governor when the Turkish army took the city in 1922 (Umar, *İzmir'de Yunanlilarin Son Günleri,* p. 280).

[39] For extensive descriptions of banditry and relations between bandits, local notables. and the state, see Sabri Yetkin, *Ege'de Eşkiyalar* (Istanbul, 1996); and Ersal Yavi, *Efeler* (Aydin, 1991).

[40] Gerasimos Augustinos, *The Greeks of Asia Minor* (Kent, 1992), p. 93.

[41] Berber, *Sancili Yillar,* pp. 1 33, 163, 191. For example, Adnan Menderes, who would later become the prime minister of Turkey, played in a mixed football team in the fall of 1919. Umar, *İzmir'de Yunanlilarin Son Günleri*, p. 238.

[42] Berber, *Sancili Yillar*, p. 91.

[43] Ibid., p. 229.

[44] Housepian, *The Smyrna Affair,* pp. 142-43.

[45] Cited in Lowry, "Turkish History", p. 14.

Professor Konstantinos Karatheodeoris, from Göttingen University, constitutes another example of the enduring complexities of loyalties and their incompatibility with rigid categories. He was hired by the Greek government to establish the "Hellen University of Smyrna" in 1919. Karatheodoris' father, Kara Todori Paşa, had been a high-ranking employee of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry and played a prominent role in the delegation that represented the Ottoman Empire at the Berlin Conference in 1878.[46] During his travels in western Anatolia in 1921, Arnold Toynbee met a Greek doctor who was born in a village near Konya in central Anatolia. He was educated at the American College at Beirut, conscripted into the Turkish army during World War I, captured by the British in Palestine, and released after being interned, only to be conscripted again by the nationalists.[47] Finally there is "Dimos", who had served as the "doorman and messenger of the Greek Consulate for twenty years" and chose to stay behind "as the only employee of the consulate" when the rest of the personnel evacuated the city on 7 September 1922.[48]

We can multiply the examples of the fluidity of the social, economic, and ethnic categories in the Ottoman Empire, but this still leaves unanswered the question of why these conditions could not be maintained, and why the conflict in Asia Minor deteriorated so quickly into an ethnic conflict with Greeks and Armenians on one side and Muslim Turks on the other. The scale of killing, destruction, and the numbers who were made homeless and exiled are too large and the eyewitness accounts are too detailed and numerous to ignore as the biased observations of one group or the other. A French officer described the scene in İzmir on 13 September as follows: "The Armenian quarter is a charnel house … In three days, this rich quarter is entirely ravaged. The streets are heaped with mattresses, broken furniture, glass, torn paintings … One sees cadavers in front of the houses. They are swollen and some have exposed entrails. The smell is unbearable and swarms of flies cover them."[49] On the other side, Halide Edip, who accompanied the Turkish troops in western Anatolia, recounts how the "Turkish army reached one city after another, only to find it a heap of ashes; its population scattered, women half mad with grief, digging at the stone heaps with their nails … Hell seemed to be on an earth in which two peoples struggled, one for deliverance, another for destruction. There was no quarter given on either side."[50]

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[46] Berber, *Sancili Yillar,* p. 441; Toynbee, *Western Question,* p. 166.
[47] Toynbee, *Western Question,* p. 256.
[48] Berber, *Sancili Yillar,* p. 465.
[49] Housepian, *Smyrna Affair,* p. 136.
[50] Halide Edip, *Turkish Ordeal,* p. 367.

Causes of the Collapse

What made the people of western Anatolia rape, mutilate, and kill their neighbours with such impunity? Can there ever be a sufficient explanation for the wanton destruction of lives and property that took place in this region during the first two decades of the twentieth century? Part of the answer to this question has to come from within the region where the killings and deportations took place. In many instances people harassed, beat, forced out, and even shot their neighbours precisely because they knew them. In doing so, they were acting not on behalf of some grandiose plan or under the impetus of a deep hatred toward a specific ethnic or religious group, but to redress an insult or a slight committed by a specific individual or family. For example, Horton tells the story of a "powerful Turk who had made with several Christian girls" who was "seized and hanged" by the fathers and brothers of the girls soon after the Greek army landed.[51] Such acts of revenge played a big part in the rapid deterioration of the relations between these communities, first under the Greek occupation and then after the re-establishment of Turkish rule. But this can only be a part of the explanation, because we can also point to many instances of Turkish villagers looking after the property of their Greek neighbours when the latter were driven away to the islands in 1914, or Greek peasants protecting their Turkish neighbours from the excesses of the regular and irregular forces of the Greek army.[52]

In any case, if all that took place were petty acts of revenge, the destruction in western Anatolia would never have reached the level it did after World War I. For the civic and economic networks in the region to fall apart with the speed that they did, there had to have been a much more forceful and sustained attack, and such an attack could have come only from sources that were not integral to these networks. To put it another way, the cosmopolitan and prosperous networks that sustained İzmir were destroyed not as a result of the natural evolution and eventual clash of separate and inherently antagonistic communities, but through the decisive intervention of forces whose origins lay elsewhere.[53]

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[51] Horton, *Blight of Asia,* p. 79.

[52] Toynbee, *Western Question*, pp. 294, 389.

[53] In recent years a number of studies have approached communalism and communal violence in North India from a similar perspective, which highlights the role of "external forces and agencies". Ian Copland, "The Further Shores of Partition: Ethnic Cleansing in Rajasthan 1947", *Past and Present* 160 (August 1998), 203-39. See also Sandra Freitag, *Collective Action and Community* (Berkeley, 1989), especially part III; Gyanendra Pandey, *Construction of Communalism.*

The external intervention that was responsible for the destruction of İzmir and its surrounding areas had three components. The first two consisted of the competing ideologies of Greek and Turkish nationalisms, and the third, the substantial number of fighters who were either external or at best marginal to the civic networks of western Anatolia.

Two Nationalisms in Conflict

Mutually exclusive and antagonistic as they were, the nationalist ideologies of the Greeks and Turks were similar in one important respect: they were both products of post-Enlightenment Europe and were shaped by the same internally conflicting trends of thought concerning the history and the desired orientation of their respective communities. In the case of Greek nationalism, there was the Hellenistic thesis that emphasised the importance of reconnecting the Greeks with their history, which was the source of classical Western civilisation.[54] Many distinguished Greek and grecophile scholars became ardent followers of this line of thinking, contributing to the creation of neo-Hellenic enlightenment that was influential not only among the Greeks, but also in Western Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This line of thinking was very critical of the Orthodox Church. Adamantios Koraes, a leading thinker of this school, wrote: "If the Graeco-Roman Emperors had given to the education of the race a small part of that attention which they gave to the multiplication of churches and monasteries, they would not have betrayed the race to the rulers more benighted than themselves."[55]

No Greek nationalist could afford to turn his back on the East completely, however. It was there that the Byzantine history was centred, the seat of the Orthodox Church was located, and most importantly, an overwhelming majority of ethnic Greeks continued to live until the first decades of the twentieth century. The "Romeoic" thesis, which put more emphasis on this Eastern heritage, saw the history of the Greeks as deeply intertwined with the history of the Eastern Church and regarded some aspects of Hellenistic enlightenment with suspicion because of its pagan undertones.[56] Both the Romeoic and Hellenic prescriptions for the future of the Greek nation had the same goal of creating a unified state that would include most or all of the ethnic Greeks of the region. But their understanding

[54] Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More* (New York, 1986), pp. 18-21.
[55] Quoted from Toynbee, *Western Question*, p. 337.
[56] Herzfeld, *Ours Once More*, p. 20; Richard Clogg, "*I kath'imas Anatoli:* The Greek East in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" in *Anatolica: Studies in the Greek East in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 5.

of who the Greeks were and what the character of the Greek state should be varied widely. For example, some of the more secular advocates of Greek nationalism had a much more grandiose vision of a Hellas "stretching from the river Pruth to the Nile," and they regarded the church hierarchy as being too conservative and too wedded to the Ottoman state to be trustworthy.[57] These conflicting lines of thinking pulled the Greek nationalism in opposite directions with equal force, ultimately causing it to become immobile and inflexible.

Most ethnic Greeks, especially those in the diaspora (in relationship to the new country), had at best an ambivalent attitude toward both strands of Greek nationalism. By using family networks, ethnic ties, and other historical links that dated back many centuries and extended far into Europe, the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire had played a key role in bringing about the commercial boom of the nineteenth century in the eastern Mediterranean. What put them in such an advantageous position in these networks were their multifarious links with other groups, their mobility, and the expansive nature of their activities. From their perspective, confining or focusing these activities within the boundaries of a small state was neither practical nor desirable, especially if it had to happen at the expense of other centres such as İzmir or Alexandria.

Even though the initial excitement of independence had attracted some migration to the kingdom of Greece, this did not last long and most of these families returned to their homes after having been disappointed in their prospects in the new country.[58] For example, "the town of Ayvalik, which was devastated and depopulated in 1821 had by 1896 re-acquired an almost exclusively Greek population of thirty-five thousand."[59] In İzmir, the Greek population increased from thirty thousand to seventy-five thousand between the 1830s and 1860s.[60] The wealth of Asia Minor continued to attract a steady stream of Greek nationals to the region throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. The partisans of the new state were unhappy with the cosmopolitanism of the Greek communities of Anatolia; they appeared

[57] Clogg, "*I kath'imas Anatoli*", p. 1.
[58] The establishment of independent Greece did not affect the movement of people between the islands and the Anatolian mainland. See Tuncer Baykara, "XIX. Yüzyilda Urla Yarimadasinda Nüfus Hareketleri" in *Social and Economic History of Turkey*, ed. Osman Okyar and Halil İnalcik (Ankara, 1980), pp. 279-86. Even during the Balkan wars, one of Dido Sotiriyu's brothers returned from Greece complaining that "land in Greece is very hard to work; it is full of stones and swamps." His plan was to work in İzmir or sell his land there and use the money to start a small business in Greece (Sotiriyu, *Benden Selam Söyle,* p. 50).
[59] Clogg, "The Greek Millet", p. 195.
[60] Ibid.

to be so removed from their heritage that some of them did not even speak Greek. The nationalists saw the wealthy families of İzmir and Istanbul as helping not the Greek cause, but their own interests and the interests of the Ottoman state. To correct this situation, some of them organised campaigns to "Hellenise" the lost communities, efforts that were not greeted with any enthusiasm by the locals and for the most part failed.[61]

These feelings of resentment and suspicion played a large role in pushing Greece into the two Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913, and then into the occupation of western Anatolia in 1919. Although some in Greece believed that only by uniting the wealthiest and the most successful parts of the Greek diaspora with the new homeland could Greek nationalism succeed, others did not trust the highly cosmopolitan and liberal nature of the networks abroad, and they sought to harness these to serve the interests of the new state.

As soon as the Greek army landed in western Anatolia, the whole region fell into chaos and became the site of an extremely destructive conflict that lasted for three years. There were close to 400,000 refugees from the Balkans who had been settled in western and southern Anatolia between 1912 and 1919.[62] These people were naturally apprehensive about the prospects of living under Greek rule and resisted it as much as they could. Their uncertainty was matched by the status of Anatolian Greeks who had been expelled to the islands and to Greece by the Young Turk governments before and during the Balkan wars. By the end of 1920, 126,000 of these refugees were returned and settled in western Anatolia by the Greek administration.[63] According to some estimates, at least 150,000 Muslims were left homeless as a result of the resettlement of the Greek refugees.[64]

In addition to these massive movements that shuffled and reshuffled the region's population several times over, the Greek invasion also forced the much more difficult and painful process of untangling the intricate local relations that had connected various ethnic and religious groups together. Greek youth who had been recruited into the Ottoman army during World War I, primarily to work in labour battalions, were "liberated", only to be drafted into the Greek army to fight their erstwhile friends and neighbours. As the Greek army spread into the interior, the occupying forces removed the Ottoman administrators from the upper echelons of the civil administration and put Greeks in charge of the area. However, because these

[61] Clogg, "Anadolu Hristiyan Karindaşlarimiz", pp. 80-81.
[62] McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, p. 161.
[63] Berber, *Sancili Yillar*, p. 322.
[64] Ibid., p. 247.

officials were brought from Greece, most of them did not speak any Turkish, which made it impossible for them to establish even the semblance of authority in the first months of the occupation.[65] In 1922, when the Greek army was roundly defeated and forced to flee, they "carried the Christian population with them, often by force."[66] They burned most of the villages and cities in the interior, which in turn created the pretext for revenge among the Turkish troops and Muslim residents in İzmir.[67] In retrospect, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that the only accomplishment of this profoundly misguided policy was to galvanise the sentiments of exclusion within Turkish nationalism and plant the very seeds of enmity that are often mentioned as the cause of this conflict.

In ways that were no different from its Greek counterpart, Turkish nationalism also contained some deep ambiguities at its core, affecting not only how the Turks thought of themselves and their history, but also the policies they implemented in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first and the most critical among these had to do with the ethnic definition of Turks as a community and a nation. Through the writings and activities of intellectuals from Azerbaijan, Crimea, and the Volga region of Russia such as İsmail Bey Gasprinski, Ağaoğlu Ahmet, and Akçuraoğlu Yusuf, Ottomans became aware of a community of ethnic Turks who were spread across a large territory extending from the Mediterranean basin into Central Asia. This conception of Central Asia as the font of Turkish civilisation was reinforced by the influence of some of the Sufi orders who

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[65] Ibid., pp. 299-317.

[66] Halide Edip, *The Turkish Ordeal*, p. 363.

[67] The extent of destruction that was carried out in the Balkans and western Anatolia between the Balkan wars and the end of the Greek occupation is well documented. It is obvious that each of the sides in these conflicts carries a part of the blame in that they all contributed to this carnage. For documentation, see Carnegie Endowment, *The Other Balkan Wars* (Washington, D.C., 1993); Toynbee, *Western Question*; McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, Housepian, *Smyrna Affair.* Unfortunately, most of the writing about this period seeks to vindicate one side or the other. It is, of course, futile to try to draw up balance sheets and compare the sufferings of different groups. Overall, if we look at the period between World War I and the exchange, the Greeks and Armenians appear as the biggest losers in the conflict. In much larger numbers than the Muslim Turks, they ended up being ejected from the only place they had known as home for generations. But if we broaden our time frame and include the emigration of more than one million Muslims from the Balkan states after 1878, we find that the latter group also suffered deeply in these tumultuous years. (See Karpat, *Ottoman Population,* p. 75; Nedim İpek, *Rumeli'den Anadolu'ya Türk Göçleri* [Ankara, 1994], p. 41.)

had moved westward from Central Asia over many centuries.[68]

Another important tie to the East was established more circuitously, by way of Europe, where exiled Ottoman intellectuals read the works of early Orientalists who were interested in Central Asian cultures, Turkic tribes, and languages.[69] The translations of the works of these European scholars would be used in the debates about the history and nature of Turkish identity, especially in the early decades of the twentieth century. There was, however, the obvious but awkward reality that this wide and broad community of Turks who were supposed to constitute a community had no real experience that linked them with each other. The Muslim Turks in places like İzmir clearly had much more in common with their Greek or Armenian neighbours than they did with their cousins in the Caucusus, along the Volga, and in Central Asia. Nevertheless, the idea of a distinct Turkish race found its way into new Turkish nationalist thought and was melded into a historical narrative that took some liberties with facts but served the requirements of the time very well.[70]

Like its Greek counterpart, Turkish nationalism also had a somewhat uncertain and wavering relationship with religion. In the course of the Greek-Turkish war, Mustafa Kemal deliberately appealed to Muslims in Anatolia. He particularly benefited from the help of the Sufi *tarikats* during the war and accepted and used until his death the honorific title *ghazi* (holy warrior), which was given to him by the Nationalist Assembly. However, in the years that followed the end of the war, Mustafa Kemal became increasingly firm in his belief that the difficulties the Ottoman Empire suffered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were caused by its failure to take part in the scientific and industrial development of the West. He placed the blame for this squarely on Islam. In the 1920s, he turned vehemently against all religion, orchestrated an all-out effort to eradicate the impact of Islam and Islamic institutions in the new state, and made sure that secularism was enshrined as a founding principle of the republic. The radicalism of this new orientation ushered in a thorough soul-searching and a persistent debate about the place of religion in modern Turkey, which continues to occupy a central place in the politics of Turkey today.

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[68] See Raymond Lifchez, ed., *Dervish Lodge* (Berkeley, 1992); Richard Tapper, ed., *Islam in Modern Turkey* (New York, 1991); Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türk Sufiliğine Bakişlar* (Istanbul, 1996); Fuad Köprülü, *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion* (Salt Lake City, 1993).

[69] Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism*, p. 10.

[70] Various arguments supporting this thesis were articulated and presented at a congress convened in Ankara in 1932 (see *Birinci Türk Tarihi Kongresi*, Istanbul, 1932).

Countering the pull of Asia and Islam on Turkish nationalism was the attraction of the West, whose ideals and institutions had become lodestars for the nationalist leaders. In the minds of Atatürk and his colleagues, there was no doubt that Western civilisation provided the only acceptable model of progress, and the positive sciences the only means of getting there. Ironically, this new orientation implied that in order to move forward, the new nation would have to turn its back not only on religion, but also on its newly discovered history in Central Asia. For a while, in order to justify such a complete turn away from the east, some writers put forth and defended, at considerable cost to historical and archaeological accuracy, the idea that Anatolia had always been the cradle not only of Turkish but all civilisations.[71]

Over the years, nationalist leaders on both sides have compensated for the ambiguities that marred the foundations of their respective ideologies by assuming a particularly rigid and intolerant stand on all issues that involved their history and their relationship to each other. They feared that any compromise would expose the weakness that lies at the core of both Greek and Turkish nationalism and prevent the two nations from fulfilling their "historical destinies". It is not a long road from this uncompromising rigidity to the justification of violence and destruction that was carried out in the name of these ideologies in and around İzmir.

Intruders

No analysis of the western Anatolian catastrophe would be complete without referring to the outsiders who carried out most of the killings and the destruction of property in the region. On the Greek side, the troops who occupied, attempted to govern, and, in their retreat, destroyed many of the towns in the interior came for the most part from Greece.[72] The bands of local Greeks who joined the Greek army were on the margins of the social and economic networks in Anatolia and were attracted by the messianic-nationalist rhetoric of the Greek army. Toynbee lists the names of some of these brigands as Yokatos Yoryi (Loaded George), Hajji Topuz Oğlu (Palmer Club's Son) Panayoti, and Kumarci Oğlu (Gambler's Son) Poti, and comments that they were "not all so very respectable … if their family professions were accurately recorded in their surnames."[73]

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[71] Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (New York, 1961), pp. 3-7.
[72] Toynbee, *The Western Question*, pp. 166-67.
[73] Ibid., p. 282. Toynbee writes that eventually many local Christians formerly engaged in peaceful occupations joined these bandits.

Until a properly disciplined Turkish army was put together in 1921, armed irregulars (*efes*, *çetes, zeybeks*) served as the backbone of the resistance against the Greeks in western Anatolia. As was the case with their Greek counterparts, the names of the Muslim *çetes* do not suggest that these groups had deep roots in the area or belonged to reputable professions. The better known among them were Yürük (Nomad) Osman, Deli (Mad) Osman, Koca Arap (Big Arab), Parmaksiz Arap (Thumbless Arab), Kürt (Kurd) Mustafa, Harput'lu (from Harput) Ömer, Piç (Bastard) Osman.[74] Kara Ali, the right-hand man of the famous bandit, Çakircali had deserted his army post in Yemen and found his way to western Anatolia.[75] Even after the centrally organised army seized control of operations, these bands continued to operate as an auxiliary force, and they played a key role in retaking İzmir. For both sides, then, victory was contingent on the performance of large numbers of groups who had no interest in the civic and economic networks in the region. Here I will touch on only those who helped the Turkish side, because they ended up playing the decisive role in how the history of İzmir and western Anatolia unfolded in these crucial years.

The origins of the armed irregulars who joined the nationalist forces were diverse. There were draft dodgers, tax evaders, and petty criminals among them. But a great many of them originated from among the tribal communities who had been moved from the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire as part of the state's recurrent campaigns of settling nomadic groups. The first of these campaigns was organised at the end of the seventeenth century, and they became increasingly more comprehensive as the imperial administration acquired the features of a modern state in the following centuries. But moving these groups and even granting them land did not always ensure that they would abandon their old ways and settle. Most of them continued their pastoral and nomadic lives in their new environment, combining them with some farming that they usually incorporated into their annual cycles of migration.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, as the Ottoman state pressed them for more taxes and for military service, these tribes became even more rebellious. In addition to various forms of passive resistance that they had always utilised, they started to organise and support armed units to rob merchants, kidnap wealthy individuals for ransom, and collect protection

[74] Yetkin, *Ege'de Eşkiyalar*, p. 31.
[75] Ibid.

fees from caravans.[76] The banditry spread to such an extent that "in 1883 the entire mountainous region in the interior of western Anatolia was under their control."[77] It is estimated that at the end of the nineteenth century there were at least 4,000 bandits organised in tens of different groups in western Anatolia; against them the state could field no more than 125 policemen and 2,035 gendarme forces in the region.[78] The Ottoman army organised a number of campaigns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to punish these *çetes* and restore the authority of the central administration in the countryside, but the advantage in these encounters lay with the brigands who were organised in smaller units dispersed in the terrain, and had created a network of support for themselves. On those rare occasions when the Ottoman army captured a famous bandit, he was punished in the most emphatic way so that others would desist from following or helping such individuals and their followers. For example, when Çakircali Mehmet Efe was caught after fifteen years of banditry, he was killed, skinned, torn to pieces, and his decapitated body was hanged from his foot to destroy all myths and rumours about his invincibility.[79]

As an alternative measure, the government relocated Kurds and Circassians in an attempt to use them in suppressing these groups in western Anatolia. But it soon became apparent that these new arrivals were no more willing to go along with the directives of the state than the previous tribes who had been settled there.

After the Balkan wars, as the Ottoman Empire drifted into World War I, the government abandoned all pretence of seeking to impose order in the hinterland of İzmir. The anarchy that ensued enticed even more people to take to the mountains in order to pursue a life of banditry. In addition to the Muslim outsiders such as the Circassians, Tatars, and Kurds, there were also a large a number of Greek bandits partaking in the fruits of the general lawlessness in Anatolia. During these early years, none of the bandit groups paid much attention to questions of national or religious affiliation in choosing either their friends or their prey.

As they drew the Greek army across western Anatolia, Mustafa Kemal's forces made extensive use of these bandit groups. This was perhaps inevitable. The Ottoman army had been fighting on many fronts continuously since 1911; it had suffered a series of defeats and had officially been de-

[76] Armed resistance by the tribes against the centralising drive of the state go back to the seventeenth century. See Çağatay Uluçay, *18 ve 19. Yüzyillarda Saruhan'da Eşkiyalik ve Halk Hareketleri* (Istanbul, 1955), pp. 80-81.
[77] Ibid., p. 31.
[78] Ibid., pp. 70-73.
[79] Yetkin, *Ege'de Eşkiyalar*, pp. 172-73.

mobilised by the armistice in 1919. By the time the nationalist effort was getting organised, there was but a skeleton left of this once formidable fighting force. When the Greek army entered Aydin in 1919, all that remained to defend that city were 10 officers, 43 soldiers, 46 pack animals, and two cannon batteries.[80] The resources of the irregular troops, by contrast, were formidable. Most of them had stayed out of the war and had used the years of turmoil and conflict to enrich and arm themselves and their followers. By force, intimidation, and offering protection, they had built for themselves a network of support among the villagers and nomadic tribes. The nationalist leaders were aware of the risks involved in relying too heavily on these groups.[81] In addition to being poorly trained and lacking discipline, they had resisted all efforts at being incorporated into the regular army, which began to be rebuilt after 1920. The fears of the nationalist lawmakers proved to be justified in that several of the bandits rebelled openly against the nationalists, and one even went over to the Greek side with his three thousand men, four cannons, and four hundred machine guns.[82] In many cases, however, in return for their support, the nationalists gave the bandit leaders a free hand in expanding their activities, raiding the cities, robbing the urban population, and especially in confiscating the properties of the fleeing Christians.

Needless to say, their service during the war improved the image of the *çetes* significantly in Turkey. For example, Mustafa Kemal invited four hundred followers of one of the more notorious bandits, Demirci Mehmet Efe, to Ankara during the war and gave him the rank of colonel in the Turkish army.[83] In some of the propaganda material, Mustafa Kemal himself was referred to and idealised as *Sari* (Blond) *Zeybek.*[84] In the years that followed the final victory of the nationalist forces, *çetes* would be

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[80] Ibid., p. 112.

[81] *TBMM [Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi] Gizli Celse Zabitlari, 1.* (Ankara, 1980), pp. 264-65. The Greek state had a similar relationship with the brigands that roamed the countryside in Thrace, Macedonia, and Thessaly. It was only in 1912 that the Greek army became a professional, regular fighting force. Up to that point, the Greek state relied on brigands to protect its interests and take advantage of the incursions these fiercely independent elements organised into the Ottoman territories. See John Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause* (Oxford, 1987).

[82] Halide Edip, *Turkish Ordeal*, p. 231.

[83] Yavi, *Efeler,* pp. 124-25. Greeks never abandoned their brigands either, even after the establishment of the central army. Right before the Balkan wars, Eleutherios Venizelos is reported to have said that "whereas the regular army fought for the state, the irregulars, as true descendants of the pre-Independence armatoles, fought for the freedom of the unredeemed Greeks" (Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause*, p. 296).

[84] Ibid., p. 1.

celebrated as romantic heroes and the veteran *zeybeks* would become permanent fixtures in parades and ceremonies marking national holidays.

The Responsibility of the State

The overwhelming presence of these *çetes* in some of the more violent crimes that were committed, especially in İzmir, is sometimes used as a way of clearing the regular nationalist army and the Ottoman and Turkish governments from any responsibility in the events surrounding the İzmir fire. There is no doubt that without the presence of these outsiders, neither İzmir nor its interior would have been destroyed, at least not to the extent that they were. Yet the fact remains that no matter how weak they might have been, neither the nationalist government nor its army was very effective or interested in preventing the persecution of Greeks and Armenians or protecting these communities at a moment when such protection was sorely needed. After all, Mustafa Kemal himself was in İzmir while the city was burning, and he even had to move from his headquarters on the waterfront to the home of his future wife in Göztepe when the fire came too close. On the journey, he had to pass through the entire city, and it was feared that "the waves of panic-stricken people would overwhelm the Ghazi and smother him."[85]

Why, then, did the late-Ottoman and the early nationalist regime lose interest in the terrible fate of the Greeks and Armenians? Was there a preconceived plan of mass murder directed at Armenians and Greeks? Was what happened in western Anatolia a part of this master plan, or, alternatively, did the Ottoman and Turkish officials seize on these events that were beyond their control and use them to realise their ultimate goal of ridding Anatolia of Armenians and Greeks? If so, why? Was a racist ideology or sentiment behind the commitment of these crimes or the failure to prevent them? These key questions lie at the heart of the Ottoman Empire's fateful years. It is unlikely that a reasonable conversation will take place among historians or that anything resembling a consensus will emerge unless these questions are addressed in a way that is perceived as fair by all parties to the discussion. The following points, however, may provide a reasonable place to start such a conversation, especially in relation to the Greeks and Armenians of İzmir.

It is quite clear that, starting from the final decades of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman, the Young Turk, and the nationalist administrations became increasingly suspicious of the position and the

[85] Falih Rifki Atay, *Çankaya* (Istanbul, 1969), p. 324.

aspirations of the Greek and Armenian residents of the empire. The persecution of Muslims in the Balkans after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78, the shifting policies of the great powers, and the uncertainties inherent in Turkish nationalism are some of the factors that brought about this general mistrust. By the early decades of the twentieth century, the Greeks and Armenians had become the "others" of Turkish nationalism. The rhetoric the nationalist representatives used in some of their deliberations in the Ankara Assembly leaves no doubt as to how they had come to perceive these communities.[86] In addition to this ideology, which now advocated the creation of a homogeneous nation, the Young Turks and their nationalist descendants also possessed a fledgling communication network and a new secret police organisation, the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa,* both of which they used very effectively in remaking Anatolian society.[87] Needless to say, little room was left in this environment for those who believed that some reconciliation might still be possible. For example, Mehmet Refet, the editor of the İzmir newspaper *Köylü,* was first imprisoned by the Greeks and then sent into exile by the Turks because his liberal views clashed with both of the competing nationalisms in the region.[88] It would still be wrong, however, to assume that these hardening political attitudes accurately reflected the sentiments of the population at large. One way of demonstrating the growing disjunction between late-Ottoman and Turkish politics and society would be to point out the popularity of the *Köylü* itself, which, with its liberal editorial policy, had attained a very wide circulation in the early years of the Young Turk period.[89]

Identifying the culprits and specifying the circumstances of the destruction of İzmir will undoubtedly take much more research and conversation among researchers. In the meantime, it serves no historical purpose to impute collective guilt or ascribe indiscriminate victimhood for an entire people forever. When history is presented from a perspective that seeks to justify either one of these points of view, it produces a distorted picture that cannot do justice to the actual record of events.

After the illustrious historian Arnold Toynbee toured Greece and western Anatolia in 1921, he wrote a book that makes it very difficult to put

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[86] *TBMM*, *Gizli Celse Zabitlari*, p. 322.

[87] The 1927 census shows how effective and efficient this campaign was. According to its findings, only between 11 and 38 Greek-speaking individuals were left in places like Ödemiş, Seferihisar, Tire, all old centres of Greek life (*Umumi Nüfus Tahriri*, p. 23).

[88] Berber, *Sancili Yillar,* pp. 192-93, 270.

[89] Zeki Arikan, "Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet Dönemlerinde İzmir Basini," *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* 1: 109.

all the blame or the pity on one or the other side. In fact, his *Western Question in Greece and Turkey* included so many descriptions of killings and destruction inflicted by the Greek army that it was found to be unduly harsh in its criticism of Greece, and he was forced to resign from the coveted Koraes Chair of Modern Greek and Byzantine History at the University of London in 1924.[90] It was the fact that they witnessed the destruction in western Anatolia that prompted authors like Toynbee and Halide Edip to warn their readers about the pitfalls of exalting the glories or idealising the sufferings of national communities, as well as justifying the crimes committed against them. It is with their words that I conclude this essay. Toynbee wrote:

> The politicians and chettes are unlikely to be found among those homeless and starving masses, and we cannot harden our hearts against their misery in the comfortable belief that they are suffering for their own crimes. Neither did they sin nor their fathers, that the tower has fallen upon them.[91]

Halide Edip echoes him:

> There is no such thing as a guilty nation. One of the obstacles to peace is the hysterical and exaggerated propagating of people's sufferings for political purposes or the martyrdom of their fathers in which they have had no share. The consequence is either a destructive and pathological feeling of revenge or shame in the generation which is not responsible for the past. And the political gambler takes advantage of this passion and uses it to the detriment of one nation or another.[92]

[90] See Richard Clogg, *Politics and the Academy: Arnold Toynbee and the Koraes Chair* (London, 1986).
[91] Toynbee, *Western Question*, p. xv.
[92] Halide Edip, *The Turkish Ordeal*, p. 307.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WHAT DID YEATS UNDERSTAND BY "BYZANTIUM"?

ROY FOSTER

W.B. Yeats once remarked that sex and the dead were the only two topics of interest to a serious and studious mind.[1] The reflection came when he was contemplating old age and illness, and echoes a wish to push out the boundaries of life, and explore various routes to rejuvenation – an impulse which would take him, during the last decade of his life, down some strange and dangerous paths. But rather than prospecting his forays into the murky worlds of Steinach operations and right-wing politics in the 1930s, I want to look at the genesis and implication of his two great poems about Byzantium, written and published between 1926 and 1930.

They are indeed about sex and death – but also reflect the poet's powerful ability to create and identify with a transformative idea of a city which he had never visited and a civilisation which he reinvented for his own purposes. It may be the case that modernist writers identify with cities rather than countries: Cavafy's Alexandria, Joyce's Dublin and Trieste, Joseph Roth's Vienna, Calvino's Venice, Kafka's Prague. Yeats adopted Byzantium.

But why Byzantium? It was, you could say, one of Yeats's holy places: an image he carried with him, and somewhere he dreamed of, read about, and turned into a series of poetic images. The same is true of Japan, of India, of Tibet. All are places which he conjured up in poems and plays; and even today his readers in Japan and India see a special connection between Yeats and their countries. Yet – as with Byzantium (or Constantinople, or Istanbul) – he never actually went there. In a sense, he did not have to. But he dreamt of time-travelling there. In his occult book of historical patterns, *A Vision*, he wrote:

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[1] W.B. Yeats to Olivia Shakespear, 2 or 4 Oct 1927, printed in Wade, *Letters of W.B. Yeats*, p. 730.

> I think if I could be given a month of Antiquity and leave to spend it where I chose, I would spend it in Byzantium a little before Justinian opened St. Sophia [537 c.e.] and closed the Academy of Plato [529 c.e.]. I think I could find in some little wine-shop some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions, the supernatural descending nearer to him than to Plotinus even, for the pride of his delicate skill would make what was an instrument of power to princes and clerics, a murderous madness in the mob, show as a lovely flexible presence like that of a perfect human body.
>
> I think that in early Byzantium, maybe never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one, that architect and artificers – though not, it may be, poets, for language had been the instrument of controversy and must have grown abstract – spoke to the multitude and the few alike. The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books, were almost impersonal, almost perhaps without the consciousness of individual design, absorbed in their subject matter and that the vision of a whole people. They could copy out of old Gospel books those pictures that seemed as sacred as the text, and yet weave all into a vast design, the work of many that seemed the work of one, that made building, picture, patterns, metal-work of rail and lamp, seem but a single image, and this vision, this proclamation of their invisible master, had the Greek nobility, Satan always the still half divine Serpent, never the horned scarecrow of the didactic Middle Ages.[2]

That idea of a society where unity of being could be created in an archaic community was always with him; a few years before, remembering his youthful ambitions, he had written

> . . . [In the 1880s] I had begun to hope, or to half hope, that we might be the first in Europe to seek unity as deliberately as it had been sought by theologian, poet, sculptor, architect from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. Doubtless we must seek it differently, no longer considering it convenient to epitomise all human knowledge, but find it we well might could we first find philosophy and a little passion.[3]

Yeats's Byzantium poems, then, written in his early sixties, took up ideas which he had nurtured since his youth about Ireland, which is one way I want to look at them. Some can be traced back directly to influences of his youth such as William Morris, who also nurtured a cult of Byzantium

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[2] W.B.Yeats, *A Vision* (1937 version, ed. A.N. Jeffares), p. 267
[3] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies,* p. 195.

which related directly to his theory of aesthetics and an integrated society.[4] But as Yeats's biographer, I want to look more closely at where he was in his life when he wrote them. "Sailing to Byzantium" was written in the summer of 1926, its sequel "Byzantium" in 1930. I will deal with them separately at first, but it's important to stress that one reason why these poems have attracted so much exegesis is that they were the result of an intense period of several years of reading about history as part of the genesis of his book about historical cycles, *A Vision*.

The first version of this philosophical *vade-mecum* was published in 1925, a year before he wrote "Sailing to Byzantium"; and he had been immersed in Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Holmes's *The Age of Justinian and Theodora*, Eugénie Strong's book about religion and art in the Roman Empire *Apotheosis and After Life*, and much else. We know a lot about Yeats's reading, because his library was carefully kept together by his wife and children and is now in the National Library of Ireland. Yeats was something of a magpie reader, and in a number of cases, the later pages of a volume remain uncut. But he certainly cut the pages of Holmes, Gibbon and Strong: and when he received his Nobel prize money in 1923, he spent a good deal on books (as well as stair-carpets for his house in Merrion Square). The books he bought at this stage of his life included eight volumes of the *Cambridge Medieval History*, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, titles which reflected his interest in the eastern empire during its heyday (or what Yeats thought was its heyday) and provided images and information on the subject.[5]

So, by mid-1926, he was saturated in ideas of Byzantium in the sixth century (the period he described in *A Vision*) and also at the end of the first millennium of the Christian era, which is specifically where he located the second Byzantium poem. Both poems are works rooted in Yeats's idiosyncratic learning: but they reflect much more. We need to look at where the poet was – in several senses – when he wrote them. In all the many commentaries about the meaning of the Byzantium poems, this is very rarely taken into account.

First, "Sailing to Byzantium". In 1926, Yeats was 61 and feeling his age. He had been married to his wife George for eight years, and the great flood of collaborative psychic activity which had rescued and then fuelled his marriage had ended. He was still a senator – a "smiling public man", as he would ruefully put it in a famous poem, "Among School Children" – living in Dublin (the house that needed the stair carpets) and

[4] See T. McAlindon, 'The Idea of Byzantium in William Morris and W.B. Yeats'.
[5] See Foster, *The Arch-Poet*, p. 247.

spending summers, inspirationally if uncomfortably, in his converted Elizabethan tower-house at Ballylee Co Galway. Much of the work he was writing reflects a sense of ageing, with concomitant regrets for the sexual events and, even more, missed opportunities of his youth.

> A crazy man that found a cup,
> When all but dead of thirst,
> Hardly dared to wet his mouth
> Imagining, moon-accursed,
> That another mouthful
> And his beating heart would burst.
> October last I found it too
> But found it dry as bone,
> And for that reason am I crazed
> And my sleep is gone.[6]

"The Empty Cup" comes from the poem he wrote shortly before "Sailing to Byzantium": significantly called "A Man Young and Old", it contains coded references to his own sexual history – including –rather chillingly – the brief consummation of his long-sustained love for Maud Gonne, when they had for a short period been lovers.

> We should be hidden from their eyes,
> Being but holy shows
> And bodies broken like a thorn
> Whereon the bleak north blows,
> To think of buried Hector
> And that none living knows.
>
> The women take so little stock
> In what I do or say
> They'd sooner leave their cosseting
> To hear a jackass bray;
> My arms are like the twisted thorn
> And yet there beauty lay;
>
> The first of all the tribe lay there
> And did such pleasure take --
> She who had brought great Hector down
> And put all Troy to wreck --
> That she cried into this ear,
> 'Strike me if I shriek.'[7]

[6] Allt and Alspach, *Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, p. 454.
[7] Ibid., p. 455.

Both poems recall past lives and sexual exploits. So "Sailing to Byzantium" may originate in an early piecemeal draft where the poet recalls the many lovers for whom he took off his clothes; but now he must prepare to take off his body, and prepare for death.

At the same time, he was beginning, it seems, to long for and look for romance that he believed had passed him by. So, we find him, in June 1926, leaving Dublin for a weekend in the country (probably to his long-suffering wife's relief). He went to stay with a rich Irish-American family, the Bourne Vincents, at their magnificent mansion near Killarney, Muckross House. (It was later given by the Vincent family to the state and is now the centrepiece of the Bourne Vincent national park.) We know from Yeats's letters that there was a heatwave; that the company included the writer Shane Leslie and his wife, and various fashionable people – including young girls (flappers) got up in 1920s fashions and heavy make-up "to shock the county", as Yeats put it. The late Billy Vincent, son of the house, was then a small boy and told me he remembered flooding the poet's bedroom when his bath overflowed – and also, to his astonishment, witnessing Yeats "talking to the trees" as he walked around the beautiful park. Of course, this meant he was composing, as he did, out loud. And during this visit to Muckross he wrote, in an unpublished letter to his friend Lady Londonderry:

> The only thing for which I have ever envied wealth is that it permits a family to put down deep roots into some soil. You are right to find the *Sidhe* [fairy world] no fantasy. I often feel when I talk to some old woman in Connaught that I am not far from Plotinus. At the break up of the Roman Empire refugees – flying from a horror like that of Russia today – refugees, both pagan & Christian, came to Ireland. When I hear the S*idhe* called the 'ever-living' & such names I think of such phrases as 'Authentic Existants' – Mackenna's translation – 'True Being' and so on applied to souls in eternity by Plotinus. Connaught even still sometimes seems to me half Greek. I think – without evidence doubtless – that St Patrick & his Christians were not the only missionaries. I came here to write a poem about a medieval Irishman longing for Byzantium – Dublin was too full of distractions – so am rather full of the thing. I want to bring not only Modern but Ancient Ireland into the great world.[8]

"A medieval Irishman longing for Byzantium". In fact, other correspondence of Yeats's at this time shows that he was preoccupied with the assonances between medieval Byzantine art and design, and that of Ireland: he drew attention to perceived likenesses between jewelled croziers, manuscript

[8] 21 August 1926, quoted in Foster, *The Arch-Poet,* p. 326.

illumination (particularly the Book of Kells), and the stylised figurative art of both cultures (which he asked the young artist Norah McGuinness to stress in her illustrations for a republication of his short stories at this time). Before exploring further either the personal reverberations of the poem, or its rich storehouse of images, we must look at the poem itself in its finished version.

I

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God’s holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make

Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.[9]

This was by no means how the poem looked at first. The first – much more awkward – drafts, titled "Toward Byzantium", are clearer if stumbling.

All in this land – My Maker that is play
Or else asleep upon His Mother's knees
Others that as the mountain people say
Are at their hunting and their gallantries
Under the hills, as in our fathers' day
The changing colours of the hills and seas
All that men know, or think they know, being young,
Cry that my tale is told, my story sung.[10]

Clearly, the evocation of Kerry, mountain folk, hills and sea, and the "gallantries" of the young are much more immediately reflective of his actual situation. The next draft verse returns to the image of the Christ-child and his mother, and an Irish labourer, "Teig" sleeping in the shade. It continues

I therefore travel towards Byzantium
Among these sun-brown pleasant mariners
Another dozen days and we shall come
Under the jetty and the marble stair –

These are sharply concrete images of the actual urban geography of Byzantium, which he had gleaned from Holmes's book, but were dropped for this poem; as we will see, he would disinter them for the second Byzantium poem a few years later. A middle version, still nowhere near the final draft, went:

But now these pleasant dark-skinned mariners
Carry me towards that great Byzantium
Where all is ancient, singing at the oars
That I may. look on the great church's dome
On gold-embedded saints and emperors

[9] Allt and Allspach, *Variorum Poems*, pp. 407-8.
[10] This and the following early drafts are discussed in Jeffares, "The Byzantine Poems of W.B. Yeats".

> After the mirroring waters and the foam
> Where the dark drowsy fins a moment rise
> Of fish that carry souls to paradise.

Again, much of this is dropped – but the ideas will re-appear in the later poem, especially the idea of dolphins carrying souls to paradise. The last two verses of this intermediate draft bring in the idea of the soul 'fastened to a dying animal', and the sages standing in a holy mosaic. And, finally, that enigmatic golden bird.

The finished poem radically compresses these themes. Unlike the first drafts, it throws you right in at the deep end, and shifts the focus away from the poet's observation of what surrounds him. Instead – in what will become a theme in much of his late work – he ironically notes that his "unageing intellect" and its impressive products are of no interest to "the young in one another's arms" – caught in the sensual music of a universe that is sexy, fertile, throbbing. Those "mackerel-crowded seas" might be a sort of Irish version of Homer's Greek "wine-dark sea", but also relate to youthful experience fishing off the Sligo coast or in Dublin Bay. Either way, it is all about spawning and procreation.

Thus, the poet – or his later ego – sails to Byzantium, as to the Isles of the Blessed, or Watteau's Cytherea. Though he is defined first as a "tattered coat upon a stick", old and withered, he can still sing, and clap his hands. (Yeats was saturated in William Blake's writings and this may be a memory of a lovely vision Blake had, when he saw his dead young brother "clapping his hands with joy" as he ascended to Paradise.) In the Byzantine world, monuments of creative productivity will be studied and appreciated; and as the next verse shows, the poet prays that he might be assumed into his own paradise by being absorbed into the rhythmic beauty of miraculous figures – sages, who are creators as well as thinkers – portrayed immobile in a mosaic wall. Those fiery effects are not hellfire, they represent a sort of eternity: they almost certainly derive from the mosaics at Ravenna, which Yeats had seen on his trip to Italy a year or so before, and also studied in books. We will come across those flames again.

Finally, that tricky bird. There is a final stage of being assumed into "the artifice of eternity". The poet will not be a sage immobilised and immortalised in a Byzantine mosaic. He would prefer to be incarnated as a mechanical bird, a miraculous imperial toy, singing – and prophesying – to the lords and ladies of Byzantium. Those sexually active fauna of the first verse will live their short hour and decay, but the art of creativity and philosophy will last on.

Where does the bird come from? There were indeed such birds in the imperial palace of Byzantium (and in any well-off children's nursery in Yeats's own era, for that matter). But the Byzantine Emperor's singing mechanical birds feature specifically in a medieval account by the Italian (Lombard) Bishop Liutprand, when he visited Constantinople, which seems an obvious source for Yeats. There is a stumbling-block, in that the most accessible English translation came out in 1930, too late for the first Byzantium poem. But an Oxford colleague, the late Dr Mark Whittow, told me that he was told by the son of Eric Maclagan, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum and a friend of Yeats, that McLagan had translated Liutprand's description of the mechanical bird for Yeats. (Liutprand's description was probably also known to Holmes, Gibbon and other authorities.)

There is another possible echo being picked up by Yeats, from his friend Arthur Symons's 1893 essay on Walt Whitman, where Symons asked: "Is art destined to subside lower and lower into a kind of Byzantine decrepitude, as the toy of a so-called cultivated minority?" This may have stuck in Yeats's memory, but by this stage of his life he would not have been particularly bothered about art becoming the province of a cultivated minority. (One of his more bizarre reasons for approving of Mussolini was that he thought Italian fascism believed in creating special conditions where artist's families would be allowed to flourish creatively.) At all events, his use of the "toy" golden bird is presented as a sort of *coup de théâtre.*

This bothered some critics, including W. H. Auden, but represents the high point of the kaleidoscope of images which lift this poem into the stratosphere. Those images echo back through the 60 years of life Yeats had lived: Blake's mystic visions, the Ravenna mosaics that Lady Gregory had shown him on his first Italian trip in 1907, in San Apollinaire Nuevo (golden virgins and martyrs immobilised in a frieze) and the Sicilian ones at Monreale he had seen in 1924; his admiration of the urban culture of Stockholm on his Nobel visit in 1923; the ideas of age, decline and the mysterious process of artistic creation, which he had very recently explored in "Among School Children". Phrases like "the artifice of eternity", and the preoccupation with a magic fire that preserves and eternalises, go back as far as his occult short stories of the 1890s. But in the end, we come back to where the poem starts: an old man observing passion, and postulating it against philosophic wisdom and eternal art. Will his transmutation into a mechanical bird which sings prophetic truths really make up for missing out on all that? Much of what he would do and write over the decade and a half of life left to him suggests that it would not.

This brings us to the next Byzantium poem, written four years later: and again, I will approach it biographically. Between 1926 and 1930 much had happened in Yeats's life: rows in Ireland with Church and State over issues of censorship and freedom of thought (and sexual behaviour), tensions in his marriage arising from his attraction to younger women and his wife's drinking, worries about money (much of the Nobel cash disappeared in railway shares) – and above all, health. His heart and circulation were bad, and he began to spend winters in Rapallo, near his and George's old friends Ezra and Dorothy Pound – which brought its own tensions. It was in Italy, in January 1930, that he fell seriously ill with Malta fever and nearly died. He was still weak throughout the spring but began, in June, cautiously to feel his way back into life: and, as he put it, "warmed himself into life" by writing a new poem.[11]

It was simply called "Byzantium", and was – he said – precipitated by a letter from his friend Thomas Sturge Moore, who had taken issue with the last stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium" (that controversial golden bird again) and the tensions it set up between the artifice of art and reality.[12] We also know from a prose note in a notebook how Yeats meant the poem to develop. The note is dated 30 April, when he was – significantly – revising *A Vision* (a second version would appear in 1937). This memorandum reads: "Subject for a poem…Describe Byzantium as it is in the system [i.e., the system of *A Vision*] towards the end of the first Christian millennium. A walking mummy. Flames at the street corners where the soul is purified, birds of hammered gold singing in the golden trees, [dolphins] in the harbour, offering their backs to the waiting dead that they may carry them to paradise. These subjects have been in my head for some time, especially the last."[13]

This gives quite an insight into the baggage Yeats carried in his head. But it also expresses the preoccupations of a man who had just had a close brush with death, and the second Byzantium poem is essentially a supernatural vision of the transition after death to another world – a subject which would preoccupy Yeats more and more, and which he would explore unforgettably nine years later in one of the very last poems he wrote, on his actual deathbed in the south of France – "Cuchulain Comforted".

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[11] See dedication to *The Winding Stair*, quoted in Allt and Allspach, *Variorum Poems*, p. 831.
[12] Correspondence quoted in Foster, *The Arch-Poet*, pp. 401-2.
[13] From "Pages From A Diary Written in Nineteen Hundred and Thirty", reprinted in W.B. Yeats, *Explorations*, p. 290.

Like "Sailing to Byzantium", "Byzantium" is a storehouse of Yeatsian images – some of them clearly preserved from the first jettisoned versions of the earlier poem. Here is the finished version:

The unpurged images of day recede;
The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;
Night resonance recedes, night-walkers' song
After great cathedral gong;
A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains
All that man is,
All mere complexities,
The fury and the mire of human veins.

Before me floats an image, man or shade,
Shade more than man, more image than a shade;
For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth
May unwind the winding path;
A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
Breathless mouths may summon;
I hail the superhuman;
I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,
More miracle than bird or handiwork,
Planted on the starlit golden bough,
Can like the cocks of Hades crow,
Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
In glory of changeless metal
Common bird or petal
And all complexities of mire or blood.

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
Where blood-begotten spirits come
And all complexities of fury leave,
Dying into a dance,
An agony of trance,
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
The golden smithies of the Emperor!
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet

Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.[14]

Here again, the images emerge from Yeats's reading of historians of the era. He is using the extremely detailed and concrete picture of the geography of Byzantium given by Holmes in *The Age of Justinian and Theodora*: the gongs beaten at the entrance to the churches, the inlaid marble square leading down to the sea, the projecting jetty, the great bay washing up to the fabled city. And that sea is a Platonic sea; Yeats's reading in Neo-Platonic philosophy, especially Plotinus, is much to the fore (that image of "Hades' bobbin", the shuttling spindle drawing in the after-world, is Platonic). And what is going on here is a fabulous connection being made between that very definite image of the miraculous city (rather as in that earlier highly specific fantasy of time-travelling to a wine-shop and meeting a philosophical mosaic-worker) – and the land of the dead, which he had himself so very nearly visited a few months before.

So we begin with that concrete vision of Byzantium, this time as night falls; the noises in the street, the fabulous architecture of the dome of St Sophia, which overcomes and makes puny the quotidian concerns of men. There is a query here, going back to the earliest manuscript versions: is that word "disdains" i.e., rejects or holds in contempt – or is it an archaic word "distains" – which means to make clear, or purify? Either would work, in a sense, though creating different meanings. I prefer the first, since Yeats never corrected it in several printings.

I have another, completely intuitive, offering here too. Yeats lived in Oxford from 1918 to 1922, in the centre of the ancient city. From his house in Broad Street, he would have heard the night-time sounds of, not the Emperor's drunken soldiery, but the University's drunken students; and as the streets fell quiet he would take a turn around Radcliffe Square. The Square is dominated by the magnificent Radcliffe Camera, with its vast dome, which catches the moonlight and indeed starlight in an unearthly way. I sometimes wonder if this first verse is a kind of memory of Oxford as well as an invocation of Byzantium – especially as the poem has strong assonances with Yeats's earlier poem about Oxford, "All Souls Night" – which also deals with visitations of the dead, mummy-figures, and ghostly breaths.

Back in "Byzantium", the "fury and the mire of human veins" (blood and excrement, the kind of imagery which would rear its head in Yeats's late poems) gives way to a visitation from a ghost, welcoming to the world of the dead. That "unwinding" idea is, I think, the Platonic

[14] Allt and Alspach, *Variorum Poems,* pp. 497-8.

notion of "dreaming back" through one's past life at the moment of death, to which Yeats constantly recurred. And then the third stanza brings in the bird again, doing its own disdaining of human mess. Miraculous as it is, it can "scorn aloud" the ordinary and mortal products of nature. It is what the poet thought he wanted to become in "Sailing to Byzantium".

But that is not the conclusion. The astonishing vision of the next verse beings us into those fires which Yeats had been preoccupied by in his "thought for a poem" a few months before – purifying the souls of the dead. But is this a magical phenomenon – or is this whole verse actually a description of what is pictured or enacted in the marble inlay of the magnificent square fronting on the Bosphorus? I think the latter. The description of those flames could be of flames immobilised in mosaic (and themselves composed of iridescent blocks made by the glassblower's flame). It is a sort of double play – the depiction in mosaic of an actual spiritual process.

And this projects into the final fabulous image of the dolphins bearing the souls of the dead, recycled from that first draft of the previous poem – but also suggesting a depiction in a mosaic (where dolphins carrying souls or spirits was a common and recurrent image, as in classical sculpture). That heart-stopping image of a roaring sea bearing dolphin-borne souls, crashing in onto the wrought marble architecture described by historians of Byzantium, could be an actual impact: or it could be the description of something immobilised in mosaic. Either way, it represents – yet again – the tension between the "fury and mire" of human passions, human imperfections, human desires – and the "artifice of eternity" which – for Yeats – was represented by his vision of a Byzantium that never was. The city was created in his imagination – that imagination which, James Joyce once said, no surrealist poet could equal.

There is more to be said of the language employed with such mastery in these two poems – the consummate half-rhymes, the almost-iambic metre of "Sailing to Byzantium" and its brilliant breaks, the audacious repetitions, the hard fricatives of sound, the polysyllables like "intricacy" and "complexities", the words so carefully chosen; but I've chosen to write instead about ideas, images and life. The ideas and images in this pair of poems have also been laboriously related to Shakespeare and Yeats's preoccupation with King Lear, to passages from Dante (rather more relevant, in my opinion), and less comprehensibly to Yeats's favourite neo-Platonist Plotinus and the Enneads.[15] There are also echoes

[15] See for instance F.A.C. Wilson, *W.B. Yeats and Tradition*, and Giorgio Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art*.

of Japanese Noh plays (particularly regarding those flames that do not singe a sleeve), and a hundred other tributaries to the great river of Yeats's thought. The more you read in Yeats, the more there is. In terms of his image of late antiquity there is more to say too about his immersion in images of ancient coinage from 1925, when he chaired the committee tasked with finding a designer for the coinage of the Irish Free State. His library contains books on antique coinage which have many suggestive images relating to his preoccupation of Byzantium as an imagined city.

All that is relevant to the extraordinary rich, varied, suggestive world that went on inside Yeats's head, and issued forth in his beautiful and complex poems. But in the end, one returns to life, and the life that surges through these poems: not just "fury and mire" but passion, love and longing. Yeats, like his admirer Joyce, knew about life. One of the many memorable things which the great critic Richard Ellmann said about Yeats and Joyce is sharply relevant to the Byzantium poems:

> Yeats's mind generated, out of feelings of indignation and pain, images of perfection; Joyce said he preferred the footprint seen on the sand by Robinson Crusoe to the eternal city envisioned by John. The fallen world was his natural habitat. Yeats's impulse towards order makes the myths which appear in his work, such as the annunciation of a new order, ritualised, heraldic, supernatural; for Joyce similar myths appear unrehearsed, casual, part of the order of things.[16]

In *A Vision*, Yeats had actually likened Byzantium to the Holy City invoked by St John. Ellmann's apposition of Yeats and Joyce is wonderfully put, but I think it misses the elemental part of Yeats which announces, through the mouth of Crazy Jane, that "nothing can be sole or whole / That has not been rent / For Love has pitched his mansion in / The place of excrement"; or that declares, at the very end, that "all the ladders start / In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart".[17] The Byzantium poems conjure images of perfection and eternity in a mythologised city, written at a time when Yeats's own life was racked by dissatisfaction, encroaching old age, and illness. But the resolution at the end of both poems leaves it open as to whether that fury and mire and yearning *has* actually been overcome by the visionary and supernatural perfection of artifice. And of course, it cannot be: neither for Yeats, nor for us.

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[16] Richard Ellmann, *Eminent Domain*, pp. 54-5.
[17] Allt and Alspach, *Variorum Poems*, pp. 513, 630.

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India, China and the Rediscovery of Greece

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

BOOKS TELLING STORIES: CHARTING MODERN GREEK LITERATURE DURING THE ENLIGHTENMENT

STRATOS MYROGIANNIS

Introduction

In the long eighteenth century, Modern Greek intellectuals but, also, men of letters from Europe, attempted to define Modern Greek literature and culture, often from the fall of Constantinople to their own time. The production of printed books, both secular and religious, had proliferated from the beginning of the century onwards, and Modern Greeks had started to recover from their earlier cultural inactivity.[1] Kitromilides (1983) was one of the first to point out that the cultural innovations initiated by the Enlightenment led to a vision of political reconstruction. Adamantios Koraes regarded the publication of certain works, among other factors, as the starting point of this cultural recovery. He and other prominent thinkers of the Modern Greek Enlightenment were also transmitters of European liberal and radical ideas into the Greek lands for the reform of Greek society.[2] Furthermore, Balkan Christians had already gained a certain prosperity under Ottoman rule (Mazower 2000) while this prosperity would eventually lead to more radical claims on the part of Modern Greeks. Among the books that are of particular importance for the needs of our discussion is J. R. Neroulos', *Cours de Littérature Grecque Moderne* (1827). This book stands out for many reasons and mostly because it is one of the first serious attempts to "contextualize literary works historically".[3] It is true that Neroulos' historical account started from Homer while his literary journey rounded up with poets and writers

[1] M. Vitti, *Ιστορία της Νεοελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας*, pp. 67-73.
[2] P. Kitromilides, "'Balkan mentality': history, legend, imagination", p. 183.
[3] M. Lauxtermann, "Two surveys of Modern Greek literature", p. 141.

of his time. Until then, scholars had to improvise in order to compile exploratory works which were often shaped as catalogues, dictionaries and diagrams. In their effort to provide the most informed schemas, they had to rely on their own literary calibre and cultural priorities. Hence, they usually created all-inclusive catalogues of works and/or authors, arranged either by date of publication or alphabetically by name. Such works include – but are not restricted to – Elladios' *Status praesens Ecclesiae Graecae…* (1714) and Prokopiou's *Demetrii Procopiii Macedonis Moschopolitae* (1722). These first efforts are mainly traditional works inspired by a personal need to chart the cultural state of Modern Greeks in a given historical period. Some of them are written in Latin while others polemically target a specific political or religious group.[4]

Only after the middle of the eighteenth century do we have works that appear to be inspired by cultural and intellectual developments in the West; for example, the French Enlightenment and its intellectual product, the *Encyclopédie*, or the British Grand Tour with its Western gaze on Modern Greeks and their culture.[5] Academic research has so far been limited, thus silently admitting uneasiness in evaluating these works. Nevertheless, if we closely examine their scope and characteristics within the theoretical framework of spatiality, we can safely discern diverse organisational patterns that oscillate between tradition and innovation. More specifically, as we have already mentioned, early in the eighteenth century, such works focussed on nearly all the books published in a given period, while towards the end of the century, and mainly at the beginning of the nineteenth century, we can observe new patterns of organisation which are characterised by a secularisation of the content and a "Europeanisation" of the scope. Regarding the secularisation of thought, Israel argues that this process had already been completed by the middle of the eighteenth century in Western Europe.[6] On the other hand, a "Europeanisation" process affecting the cultural practices used by Modern Greek individuals but also the self-image of the community itself was already under way from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards.[7] In what follows, I set out to examine two representative works written by scholars from East and West. The first work is the "diagram" (that is how D. Katartzis himself called it), found in his writings (*Γνῶθι σαυτόν*, 1783-1791) while the second is the "catalogue" which the English traveller W. M. Leake included in his *Researches in Greece* (1814).

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[4] Katsigiannis, "Ιστορία και Ιστορίες Λογοτεχνίας", p. 54.
[5] Fussell, "The Eighteenth Century and the Grand Tour", p. 129.
[6] J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 4-6.
[7] E. Myrogiannis, *The Emergence of a Greek Identity*, pp. 154 and 169-70.

Before we proceed to the analysis of the two works, we should introduce our men of letters. On the one hand, Dimitrios Katartzis (1730-1809) was one of the most prominent scholars of his time. Born in a Phanariot family in Constantinople, he took an excellent education which helped him take up official posts in the Danubian Principalities. Eventually, he reached the position of the Grand Logothete in Wallachia, one of the most prestigious posts within the administration of the principalities. Furthermore, he was a fervent exponent of the Enlightenment and wrote philosophical essays in order to inspire his fellow Modern Greeks to educate themselves. On the other hand, William Martin Leake (1777-1860) was an English military man and diplomat, Fellow of the Royal Society, with antiquarian and geographical interests. He was educated at the Royal Military Academy and after graduating he served the British Army in many posts, reaching the rank of Captain. As a military man, he was sent to America, Europe and Asia on numerous missions. During his journeys, he developed an interest in exploring local cultures, thus undertaking topographical and geographical researches. Both these men of letters compiled works that managed to map numerous aspects of Modern Greek culture and their respective works, i.e., Katartzis' "diagram" and Leake's "catalogue", are representative examples of how learned men from East and West attempted to understand and define Modern Greeks as a distinct community within the Ottoman Empire. They both provided original works that combined western knowledge with eastern influences as their material dictated, to a certain degree, the overall organisation pattern. In other words, however different their work might be, it shows the intertwining of tradition and innovation in the shaping of the history of Modern Greek literature.

Spatiality theory and the search for a Modern Greek literary canon

In this chapter, I examine two book catalogues within the framework of what has been called "spatial turn", "spatial critical theory" or simply put "spatiality theory" in the Humanities. In the course of the past decades, spatiality theory not only became an insightful trend, mainly in cultural studies, but still offers new ways to view both the present and the past in renewed terms. Our theoretical framework aims at mapping the cultural spaces, seen both literally and metaphorically, that these two book catalogues attempt to define. According to Tally, spatiality theory involves, among others, the examination of aesthetic and political aspects in order to

make visible the spatial relations, real or imagined.[8] It is exactly that, namely the special relations, real or imagined, that we are looking for in order to suggest an alternative way to view how the Modern Greek cultural identity was shaped in the long eighteenth century. In addition, closely related to cultural identity issues are the concepts of "self" and "other" in the Modern Greek Enlightenment, which will also be part of our analysis.

Nevertheless, we aim to expand the limits of spatiality theory by enriching them with insights and concepts from other philosophical trends which will render the theoretical schema more suitable for the needs of this case study. The works in question do not fall into the category of literary fiction, which is the most common ground for spatiality studies. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that these works can still tell very interesting stories about themselves, their compilers and the community they were addressed to. On the other hand, we will adopt spatiality theory not literally, i.e., not as a geospace[9] but in a Bachelardian sense, i.e., metaphorically in order to grasp the specific real or imagined reality they create or envisage.[10] To do that, we will consider space, again both literally and metaphorically, not as something void but, as Lefebvre points out, as something that constitutes a social product made by individuals for specific goals.[11] This is not a new concept since, in their historical trajectory, societies always created cultural space for diverse reasons and purposes. If we view cultural space as a social product, we also agree with Foucault who argues that space is not something fixed or given.[12] Last but not least, while spatiality theory has been adopted mainly for quite modern studies, it can also be adopted to view a certain historical past under new light, since individuals and societies always have difficulties in perceiving reality and themselves within it (Goddard, 2014). This need is also highlighted by Tally (2012) in his essay about the applicability of spatiality theory to premodern works. The concept we will deploy is Jameson's "cognitive mapping" in order to grasp the real or imagined images that specific individuals projected on their works.

Therefore, our goal is to venture a hypothesis which will enable us to chart the social and cultural forces that inspired the creation of these book catalogues in order to define what we could call an archaeology of a Modern Greek literary canon or a *bibliotheca essenza* of Modern Greek literature. In this sense, we can initially accept as a basic premise for our

[8] R. Tally, *Melville, Mapping and Globalization*, p. 113.
[9] B. Piatti, *Die Geographie der Literatur*, pp. 22-23.
[10] G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xv.
[11] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* p. 30.
[12] M. Foucault, "Questions on Geography", p. 70.

case study that these book catalogues attempted to list the most distinguished works available in a given community, thus defining the community itself. In a way, they are alternative ways, on the part of their compilers, to think about and define a specific cultural space. In other words, they tell stories both about their compilers and the real or imagined cultural spaces they refer to. They also serve as reference points which contemporary or future readers can use or exploit in order to understand their reality but also a certain historical past, cultural legacies and ethnic or even national communities and identities.

Cataloguing as narrative

Besides their obvious purpose of categorising cultural knowledge into suitable lists, these works, and others belonging in the same category, also play their role as cultural maps directing their readers through cultural, political and religious paths into new knowledge and self-awareness, much as Dante did in *Divine Commedia.*[13] Book catalogues, lists and dictionaries acquired such a role within society only when certain developments had taken place in West and East, for example the emergence of capitalist forms of commercial activity, as Goldstein highlights.[14] Early forms of capitalist organisation of economic activity managed to inspire and standardise new ways to view, measure and evaluate real or imagined space. This, in turn, meant that individuals had at their disposal new ways to imagine, understand and evaluate society and reality. This also meant that new organisational patterns and ways of categorising old and new knowledge emerged. In this way, individuals and societies acquired new possibilities and potential to understand their place within a given world; in the same manner that a map or a *mappa mundi* used to help them do so in the past.[15] All these changes enabled individuals to perceive the world within new perceptual frameworks since they were able, as Jameson put it,[16] to map cultural activity but also cultural relations and realisations, which could also lead them to political realisations since these book catalogues could potentially change their views on what to believe, know or do.

A crucial part of this new understanding of the world was a new understanding of space both in a literal or metaphorical sense. As with

[13] B. Brown, "The Dark Wood of Postmodernity (Space, Faith, Allegory)", pp. 737-38.
[14] L. Goldstein, *The Social and Cultural Roots of Linear Perspective*, pp. 20-21.
[15] R. Tally, op. cit., pp. 12-13.
[16] F. Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping", p. 353.

maps, book catalogues were made with specific organisational patterns in mind, while the given abstractions of all these patterns allowed for certain new perceptions of reality.[17] In other words, each map or catalogue had a certain point of view on the part of the compiler, thus also affording numerous points of view and diverse interpretations on the part of the viewer or reader. Quite like map-makers, book compilers had to evaluate numerous and diverse works before they decided which ones would be suitable for their own catalogue and would meet their needs and purposes. In a way, these book compilers adopted the role of a literary cartographer of well-known cultures, but also of cultures that remained unknown for the majority of readers. Even the books that couldn't fit into a certain catalogue, much like the blank spaces on maps, allowed for certain loaded interpretations related to cultural, political and religious ends.

These new interpretations and points of view eventually afforded new models of political or cultural awareness (one of Jameson's arguments on the postmodern world that it is also valid in reverse,[18] since both the compilers and readers of these catalogues were able to create new mental images of cultural spaces in order to put all the pieces (books, authors and spaces) together and imagine what kind of story each catalogue was able to tell. So, the very act of reading these catalogues or lists involved a cognitive process of mapping or charting, a process which could gradually alter one's perspective on reality. It could also arouse issues of cultural and national identity since these catalogues (and the way they were organised) were attempts on the part of the compilers to tell stories about the reality of their time. These stories didn't have to be real. They could also be imagined, since each catalogue served numerous purposes. As Turchi points out, the need to create these book catalogues was related to the need to tell a certain story.[19]

The stories that these book catalogues tell lie in the organisational pattern they adopt which creates a narrative that can be interpreted according to the specific needs on the part of the readers. Given that these catalogues tell stories, i.e., they create narratives about specific cultures and traditions, real or imagined, of a given community. In addition, they served as cultural symbols, as abstractions of the cultural life within a society while, at the same time, they could inspire and incite the masses to take cultural or political action in order to defend their claimed cultural identity and tradition. Based on a given level of abstraction, these catalogues

[17] J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, pp. 167-68.
[18] F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 51.
[19] P. Turchi, *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer*, p. 11.

worked as a stimulus for readers and reminders of their culture and identity.[20] In other words, and within the theoretical framework of Mikhail Bakhtin, these catalogues, in addition to serving as early forms of a literary canon, also worked as *chronotopoi*, binding together a specific time and space, a process which enabled readers to connect in their minds a certain historical time with a certain space in a given era.[21] Overall, these works combined real knowledge with real or imagined projections on reality while they managed to tell a story since, as Jameson points out,[22] there is no better way to understand one's relation to society than mapping it with storytelling techniques; thus, creating real or imagined narratives about culture and identity. In addition, we already know the role of census and maps in shaping how individuals and societies imagined themselves.[23]

Katartzis' bibliographical "diagram"

We will now focus on the two book catalogues, attempting a discourse analysis in order to see how these works imagined Modern Greek literary culture, literature and identity. We will start with Katartzis' book catalogue which was written between 1783 and 1791 and is included at the end of his essay *Γνῶθι σαυτόν*. Early in his essay, Katartzis admitted that his "diagram" will help his compatriots to synchronise themselves with the advanced West.[24] For this reason, at the end of this essay he included a book catalogue which was divided into three parts, following the equivalent schema of Francis Bacon, as he mentioned in an explanatory footnote.[25] It is true that this tripartite schema was also adopted by D'Alembert as it is shown in his *Discours préliminaire à l'Encyclopédie* (1751). Therefore, as Bacon and D'Alembert had done before him, Katartzis adopted the same pattern, dividing all knowledge into three main categories: memory (μνήμη), reason (διάνοια) and imagination (φαντασία). These subjects were further divided into multiple subcategories. For example, memory was divided into different kinds of history and historiography;[26] reason was divided into philosophy, logic, morality,

[20] J. Frow, *Genre*, pp. 85-86.
[21] M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 84.
[22] F. Jameson, "Authentic Ressentiment: The 'Experimental' Novels of Gissing", p. 130.
[23] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, pp. 163-64.
[24] Καταρτζής, *Τα Ευρισκόμενα*, pp. 124-25.
[25] Ibid., p. 105.
[26] Ibid., pp. 138-40.

mathematics, physics and other sciences[27] while imagination was separated into poetry, drama, music, painting and other arts.[28] In a second diagram, he followed his abstract schema with its specific categories and filled it with all the available books in the Greek language that suited each of the multiple thematic subcategories of his work. As it has already been pointed out, this intellectual three-fold schema was a suitable theoretical tool to transfer the empiricism of Locke and Bacon into the *Encyclopédie* and, subsequently, into Modern Greek literary culture.[29]

Leaving aside a detailed analysis of each of the books Katartzis mentioned, as that extends beyond the limits and the scope of our subject, we can positively say that in a ready-made bibliographical plan, borrowed from the advanced West, Katartzis organised the most prominent books written in Ancient, Byzantine or Modern Greek about each of the categories of his detailed schema. In this way, he managed to complete a crucial task regarding the cultural and national identity of Modern Greeks: he managed to define that Modern Greek culture consists of books both of Ancient Greek precious knowledge and Orthodox Christian wisdom, since within his diagram one could find books written by both secular and religious authors. His intellectual effort was well in tune with the new cultural trends of the time, when within the Greek-speaking world the new cultural interests met the emerging demands for educational reform on the part of learned scholars. As can be seen, Katartzis was heavily influenced by French thought, and attempted to transfer what he considered valuable into Modern Greek culture to help his compatriots. Henderson points out the influence of British and French philosophers like Locke and Descartes on the educational methods and the philosophical beliefs of Modern Greek scholars.[30] Hence, it is crucial that for the first time all available knowledge, both secular and sacred, was fitted into a western diagram, thus metaphorically defining a cultural space of an imagined Modern Greece. What Katartzis really achieved with his diagram was to point out that Modern Greeks, like all the advanced and developed nations, had a specific culture with a specific past that extended as far back as Ancient Greece and included Byzantium and, of course, Modern Greece as cultural historical constituents; and his diagram was the most suitable proof of the slow advancement of thought within the imagined Modern Greek

[27] Ibid., pp. 140-44.
[28] Ibid., p. 145.
[29] J.N. Shklar, "Jean D'Alembert and the Rehabilitation of History", pp. 643-64 and E. Myrogiannis, *The Emergence of a Greek Identity (1700-1821)*, p. 85.
[30] G.P. Henderson, *The Revival of Greek Thought 1620-1830*, pp. 172-77.

ethnicity. In Tally's terms,[31] Katartzis' schema is a mapping narrative that charts Modern Greek cultural activity and, more specifically, book culture while, at the same time, this cultural activity was also mapped in new western terms. In essence, as Katartzis explained,[32] this diagram was to serve as a guide to those who would like to know the cultural life and the relevant developments of Modern Greeks better by studying the most appropriate books for each subject.

To be more specific, Katartzis' timeline started with the Ancient Greeks. He listed many of Aristotle's works in many subcategories, (e.g., Ἀριστοτέλους, *Πολιτικά*) and finished with books published in his own time (e.g., Εὐγενίου Βουλγάρεως, *Λογική*). However, what Katartzis' schema lacked was Modern Greek literature; in the same way that Don Quixote leaves specific locations of Spain uncharted in his narrative (Selig 1982: 341-357), Katartzis left almost blank spaces in specific subcategories. Nevertheless, this was, on his part, a real mapping of an imagined projection about the cultural activity of Greeks through the centuries. Besides, there were book entries that resembled works of fiction such as books about magic (Μιχαήλ Ψελλοῦ, *Περί ἐνεργείας δαιμόνων*) or dialogues of all sorts (e.g., Αἰνείου Γαζαίου, *Διάλογος καλούμενος Θεόφραστος*); or even proverbs in verse and other works that share common characteristics with specific literary genres (Θεοφράστου, *Ἠθικοί χαρακτῆρες*). However, literature *per se*, as content but also as specific book entries, is absent from his work while the specific subcategories, e.g., poetry, tragedy, comedy and others, are present within his diagram, as are music and other arts. In addition, the famous French equivalent of his "diagram", the *Encyclopédie*, included the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides (Jaucourt 1765: 513-520). Can we venture the hypothesis that Katartzis ignored works of Modern Greek literature such as the *Erotokritos* or other works of Cretan poetry? Did Katartzis forget to mention Homer and his works or Aesop's *Fables*? Homer's *Iliad* but also Aesop's *Fables* were significant works for the education of Modern Greeks. Research has shown that Aesop's *Fables* were well-known among Greek-speaking intellectuals of the time and it was a quite popular subject in school textbooks during Byzantium up until the nineteenth century.[33] Both these works were also included in Koraes' publishing agenda early in the nineteenth century. How could Katartzis have missed them? Even if we accept this possibility, we can still argue that his diagram was the first

[31] R. Tally, op. cit., p. 3.
[32] Καταρτζής, p. 138.
[33] Σ. Αθήνη, *Όψεις της νεοελληνικής αφηγηματικής πεζογραφίας 1700-1830*, pp. 186-87.

attempt to define Modern Greek culture by listing the most relevant books into an abstract diagram, borrowed from the civilised West, in order to highlight that Modern Greeks had a specific cultural identity which goes as far back as Ancient Greece and Byzantium. Also, with his diagram he projected his conceptual bias into antiquity since he took for granted that Modern Greek cultural identity and character originate from Ancient Greeks, Byzantines and Modern Greek authors alike, as his diagram indicated. His work served as a guide or an organiser of knowledge, as Lynch (1960: 4) argued referring to modern cities. Overall, Katartzis, created a mental map which made it easier for educated Modern Greeks to focus and organise their thoughts about who they were, especially since they were on unfamiliar ground,[34] put metaphorically, under Ottoman rule.

Leake's "research" on Modern Greek literature

In the case of William Martin Leake it seems that the main scope of his *Researches* was Modern Greek language and literature. The last, i.e., literature, is almost absent from Katartzis' schema. Leaving aside Leake's linguistic studies about the vowels, consonants and their pronunciation, we will focus on his attempt to tackle the issue of Modern Greek literature, as he admitted: "The more recent progress of the literature of the modern Greeks, and its present state, will best be understood from a list of authors, and their publications".[35] Nevertheless, "[h]is principal object was a comparison of the ancient and modern geography, by confronting the information contained in the ancient authors with the actual state of the country."[36] In the second section of his book, when he had finished with all linguistic matters, he included a separate chapter titled "Observations on the Dialect and Literature of the Modern Greeks", followed by a "catalogue of authors" including extracts from *Erotokritos*, "Russ-Anglo-Gaul", "Γεωγραφία Νεωτερική", "Korai's Translation of Beccaría", "Διδασκαλία Πατρική" and both "Prose compositions" and "Poetical compositions" as representative samples of Modern Greek literature – in the broader sense. In the chapter with his observations on Modern Greek literature, Leake first sketched a historical overview of what others had commented upon the diverse Modern Greek dialects and, next, he cited a catalogue of books in Modern Greek that had been published in the past five decades from his *Researches*, including writers, among others, such

[34] Y-F. Tuan, "Images and Mental Maps", pp. 209-10.
[35] W. Leake, *Researches in Greece*, p. 76.
[36] Ibid, pp. 184 and preface, page 1.

as Eugenios Voulgaris, Nikiphoros Theotokis, Panagiotis Kodrikas, Constantinos Dapontes, Iosipos Moisiodax, Athanasios Parios, Rigas, Adamantios Koraes (with a long list of works attached next to his name), Athanasios Psalidas and others. In other words, there is a variety of Modern Greek authors while Leake included all the publications that had a literary – however remotely defined – interest.

What all these remarks amount to is the fact that Leake was mostly interested in Modern Greek language and literature; more on language and less in literature. Nevertheless, he dedicated quite a few pages to offering valuable observations and information on the cultural activity and book production of Modern Greeks during the second half of the eighteenth century until the early nineteenth century. He was not intimidated by the limitations Katartzis faced while treating his subject. Katartzis made the first step by creating a catalogue of all the available books in Greek. This catalogue was inspired by the advancement of thought in western Europe. Next, by adopting a foreigner's eye, Leake studied the spoken idioms and the written literary vestiges of Modern Greeks as an impartial observer and interested traveller within the limits of his own "Grand Tour" in the Balkans which was part of his military public service.

Of course, more general comments, notes and footnotes about the culture, manners and customs of Modern Greeks are not rare in his study. Hence, he ended up delivering a specialised study of Modern Greek language and culture. What determined his outlook was not an orientalist view of the dominance of an individual from the West on a degenerate ethnic group of the East,[37] as it was often the case, but a quite fair and objective account of the contemporary condition of Modern Greek language and literature during his time in the Balkans. Leake did not offer information on ecclesiastical or religious books since such publications (and many others) were not included in his schema. What he did offer was to define in literary terms a new cultural space, i.e., Modern Greek language and literature.[38] and while grammar textbooks were in abundance, the lack of more specialised studies on literature, even in the form of a catalogue or list, was more than obvious. That's what makes him one of the first literary cartographers of a territory which had long remained unexplored. Overall, as we have already mentioned, his work was an eclectic secular account of Modern Greek book production, roughly from 1750 until 1814, a kind of a literary canon or a cultural guide of Modern

[37] E. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 357.
[38] R. Tally, op. cit., p. 4.

Greek literature. Last but not least, his work appeared to pose a quite challenging question: what is Modern Greek literature?

Conclusion: from book culture to a literary canon

From our examination of the two works we notice a few striking resemblances but also some very indicative differences. Both book catalogues create a specific cultural space: book production and book availability within the Modern Greek community. They both produced narratives which, in turn, produced cognitive maps about Modern Greek book culture. In terms of spatial theory, these books tell stories about real or imagined places represented in them.[39] In other words, these catalogues tell stories about the most significant books written in Greek but they also tell the story that these books constitute a specific culture that Modern Greeks share. This culture, which extends from Ancient Greek antiquity through Byzantium to Modern Greece, can be interpreted as a cultural space or as a cultural homeland. Aside from the differences between them, both books projected that Modern Greeks have a specific culture which could be organised and studied in a systematic way. From the beginning of the eighteenth century, a certain trend had already emerged on the part of Greek-speaking scholars who started to take initiatives for the educational reform of the Modern Greeks by publishing books in order to transfer their knowledge into the Greek mainland.[40] While Katartzis followed a ready-made organisational pattern, borrowed from the West, Leake's schema resembled an empirical historical account; but he took liberties. Both these works oscillate between tradition and innovation for different reasons. On the one hand, Katartzis attempted to fit both religious and secular works into a new enlightened "diagram", much like European scholars had attempted to do before him,[41] while Leake enriched a traditional type of empirical study of the Modern Greek language with an innovative section on the actual Modern Greek literature, focussing on the relevant literary production from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards and until his own time.

From this, it becomes obvious that there was a trend of secularisation of knowledge on the part of the two compilers, since they tried to fit their material into secular and – philosophically defined – empirical organisational patterns. They also attempted to synchronise their efforts with Western

[39] Ibid., p. 3.
[40] A. Vacalopoulos, *Ιστορία του Νέου Ελληνισμού*, p. 311.
[41] P. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, p. 75.

European trends of thought and action, such as Philhellenism, while transferring Western ideas into Modern Greek culture. This process had to pass through the rediscovery of the "Greekness" of Modern Greeks on the part of both Greek-speaking intellectuals and foreigners. This rediscovery of "Greekness" was already established by the pre-enlightenment and enlightenment European classicist fashion, which focussed on Greek antiquity as the cradle of European civilisation.[42] Hence, their efforts acquired an air of "Europeanisation" since they attempted to transfer knowledge from the advanced western nations into the Modern Greek "republic of letters".

Consequently, these two works created a very distinct Modern Greek cultural space in their effort to describe the cultural activity of the Modern Greek community. In a way, this was a process through which cultural space was transformed into a national homeland or a country.[43] In Greek, there is also a word play in this argument, meaning the transformation from space (χώρος) to country (χώρα). As Modern Greeks would realise that they constitute a distinct "nation in captivity", a term Katartzis first conceived and expressed in his writings,[44] they would turn their attention to their cultural heritage in order to claim their independence. So, these two works tell two very similar but also very different stories. They do tell that Modern Greeks were a distinct community with a fervent cultural life similar to all the civilised Western nations. They might differ in what they focussed on but, in essence, these works managed to offer Modern Greeks a new perception of reality; that they were a distinct community with a vivid cultural life, in terms of book production, and like all advanced European nations, they too deserved to be educated, enlightened and civilised.[45] In this way, they prepared the cultural ground for more radical claims when conditions would allow. And if we had to characterise these works in relation to each other, we would say that Katartzis offered one of the first modern accounts of the cultural activity of Modern Greeks while Leake managed to provide one of the first – however incomplete – Modern Greek literary canons.

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[42] K. Tsoukalas, "Ιστορία, μύθοι και χρησμοί. Η αφήγηση της ελληνικής συνέχειας", p. 299.
[43] Ν. Γιακωβάκη, *Ευρώπη μέσω Ελλάδας. Μια καμπή στην Ευρωπαϊκή αυτοσυνείδηση*, p. 345.
[44] E. Myrogiannis, op. cit., p. 103.
[45] W. Leake, op. cit., pp. 55, 67, 76 and Καταρτζής, op. cit., p. 138.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

EARLY BUDDHISM AND THE GREEKS

RICHARD STONEMAN

Greek thinkers are important witnesses for the Buddhism of the third to first centuries BCE. This is not an uncontroversial statement, though the idea has been gaining adherents in the last few decades. In 1980, the British scholar Everard Flintoff first proposed to the English-speaking world that the Sceptical philosopher Pyrrho of Elis (ca. 365 - 275 BCE) was influenced by Buddhist thought. He had been preceded by the Romanian scholar Aram Frenkian (1957) who drew attention to the form of argument known as the tetralemma (Latin: quadrilemma) used both by the Buddha and by Pyrrho. A classic example of this form of argument occurs in Samannaphala-Sutta D 1 58:

> Sanjaya Belatthiputta asked me 'is there another world?' … That is not what I think. I do not say it is so, I do not say it is otherwise, I do not say it is not so, and I do not say it is not not so. Is there no other world? Is it that there both is and is not another world? Is it that there neither is nor is not another world?

Nagarjuna, writing ca. 100 CE, uses the same form of argument to describe the Buddha following his *parinirvana*: "Having passed into Nirvana, the Victorious Conqueror/ is neither said to be existent/ nor said to be non-existent./ Neither both nor neither are said."[1]

Pyrrho (as reported by the later philosopher Aristocles of Messene) used the same form of argument in order to induce the radical suspension of belief which, in the Sceptical view, is supposed to induce freedom from anxiety, tranquillity. He says "one should not trust in our sense-perceptions or our opinions, but should be without opinions, uninclined, and unwavering, saying about each single thing that it no more

[1] Nagarjuna, *Mulamadhyamakakarika* 25.17, in Garfield 1995.

is than is not, or it both is and is not, or it neither is nor is not."[2]

Since Flintoff wrote, other scholars have developed the argument and reinforced it: Adrian Kuzminski in two books, *Pyrrhonism : how the Greeks reinvented Buddhism* (2008) and *Pyrrhonian Buddhism* (2021), Christopher Beckwith in his *Greek Buddha* (2015), and Giorgios Halkias in two papers of 2014 and 2020, the second of them published in a collection edited by Oren Hanner and entitled *Buddhism and Scepticism*. I have also proposed this in my book *The Greek Experience of India*.[3] But there have been dissenters. Most notably, the classical scholar Richard Bett examined the resemblances of Buddhist and Sceptical doctrine, and concluded "it is extremely difficult to believe that anything as abstruse as a quadrilemma could possibly have been communicated in any remotely intact form from the Indian 'naked wise men' to Pyrrho."[4] I take issue with this assertion on several grounds. First, the tetralemma does not seem to me a particularly abstruse idea, though it is certainly paradoxical. Secondly, Bett assumes that Pyrrho's only exposure to Indian philosophers took place on an afternoon in Taxila. Thirdly, he assumes that the naked philosophers of Taxila were purveying Buddhist doctrine. The second and third points are the important ones.

We must not forget that Pyrrho, who travelled with his teacher Anaxarchus on Alexander's expedition, spent six months with the rest of the court on board ship on the voyage down the Indus from November 326 to July 325 BCE. Also in Alexander's entourage at this time was the renegade Naked Philosopher Calanus, who had abandoned the disputations in Taxila to join the king, seduced, some said, by the comforts of his court. (Anaxarchus, too, was accused by contemporaries of being too in love with the luxuries the king could provide). In those six months' voyaging, I cannot imagine that the king and his philosophers did not gather on the poop deck of the royal ship to learn something of each other's languages and to apply them in philosophical discussions.

But as regards the third point, there is little reason to characterise the Naked Philosophers of Taxila as Buddhists. Some have thought they might be Jains. Most likely is that they professed a variety of creeds.[5] I have come to think it likely that Calanus was an Ajivika, a sect much despised by both Buddhists and Jains for its combination of extreme

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[2] Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 14. 18.1-5; R. Stoneman, *The Greek Experience of India*, pp. 348-9.
[3] Pages 346-357.
[4] R. Bett, *Pyrrho, his antecedents and his legacy*, pp. 171-77.
[5] Stoneman, "Naked Philosophers".

ascetic mortification with bursts of decadent hedonism.[6] All we are told of the Naked Philosophers in what survives of the account of Onesicritus, who interviewed them, is that they are vegetarians, receive alms, seek to eliminate pleasure and pain from the soul, and regard death as a release. These features are true of almost any Indian sadhu. Calanus, however, was surely in a position to outline the salient features of all these creeds to his Greek companions, and it seems to have been the Buddhism that impressed Pyrrho.

So, if Bett's argument is based on false premisses, and we may regard Pyrrho as an inheritor of Buddhist ideas, there is a danger of circular argument and of using what little we know of Pyrrho as evidence for the state of Buddhism in his time. Buddhist philosophy was elaborated through the centuries following Buddha's death (estimated late 5th c. BCE) up until the *Madhyamaka* of Nagarjuna (ca 100 CE) and for many centuries afterwards,[7] while our fullest source for Scepticism is the works of Sextus Empiricus, probably third century CE. Are we in danger of reading into Pyrrho – or into early Buddhism – ideas that were only developed several centuries later?

Perhaps surprisingly, I think this is unlikely. The essential ideas of Buddhism seem to have sprung fully-formed from the head of the Buddha himself. Beckwith, it is true, has suggested that even the Pali canon is an unreliable witness for originary Buddhism;[8] but I would say there is a remarkable consonance between the texts that purport to be records of the Buddha's own teaching and conversation. We have already noted the presence of the tetralemma in an early text, and it may be found in other places too. Nagarjuna says firmly "Everything is real and is not real, both real and not real, neither real nor not real. This is the Lord Buddha's teaching."[9] The fundamental results of the Buddha's long journey of discovery are the Four Noble Truths – suffering, the causes of suffering (craving and attachment), the cessation of suffering and the path to the cessation of suffering. This end is to be achieved by understanding the non-existence of self, the impermanence of all things, and dependent arising: that is, nothing has existence of itself but only as a result of something else. Beckwith asserts that "it is widely accepted that the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path are later inventions", and goes on to

[6] I argue the case in the *Greek Experience of India*, pp. 303-7. The standard survey of the Ajivikas is Basham 1951.
[7] See Westerhoff 2018.
[8] C. Beckwith, *Greek Buddha*, p. 169.
[9] Naharjuna *Mulamadhyamakakarika* 18.8.49, in Garfield 1995.

apply the same claim to the First Sermon.[10] But this claim is too extreme. For example, the verses that form the opening of the collection of *Jatakas* (Former lives of the Buddha) are probably to be attributed to the fifth century BCE,[11] and in their listing of the Ten Perfections, number 8 is Truth, which must be read as the Four Noble Truths.[12] This part of the doctrine, then, existed in the earliest stages of Buddhism, prior to the arrival of the Greeks.

The *Jatakas*, like the philosophical discussions, took shape over several centuries on the basis of the fundamental insights of the Buddha. But if we seek evidence of the Buddhist doctrines of the earliest centuries, the archaeological record can help us. The Maurya emperor Aśoka (3rd c. BCE) is received as a promoter of Buddhism, but his inscriptions preaching the dharma are notoriously ambiguous as regards their doctrinal affiliation. It is hard to read them as evidence for the detail, let alone the philosophical detail, of early Buddhist ideas. We are on firmer ground with the sculptural programmes of major early Buddhist sites including Sanchi, Amaravati, and Kanaganahalli. The stupa at Sanchi belongs to the third century BCE (as do the earliest paintings in the Ajanta caves), and though developed over succeeding centuries, the subjects depicted include a number of *Jataka* stories, as well as scenes from the life of the Buddha including his birth, his enlightenment, his first sermon (represented by the wheel atop a pillar), and his decease.[13] Most significantly for our purposes, the scenes include a group of musicians, generally identified as "Greeks" from their style of dress and instruments, which may be evidence for the participation of Greek craftsmen among the sculptors of the monument; and a scene generally taken to be King Aśoka, supported by his two wives, overcome with emotion on visiting the Bodhi-tree at Bodhgaya. This latter identification is supported by the similar representation at Kanaganahalli, where the king is identified in a caption.[14] As Monika Zin writes of this iconography, which is similar at all three sites, "The reliefs at Kanaganahalli can be utilised in an attempt to discover the folklore tradition which preceded the literary sources."[15] At Amaravati, too, scenes from the life of the Buddha are prominent, not only his mother's dream and her giving birth to the Buddha, but the First Sermon, represented by a *dharmacakra*

[10] Beckwith, op. cit..
[11] S. Shaw, *The Jatakas*, pp. liv-lv; Cone and Gombrich 1977.
[12] The Four Noble Truths are also extolled in *Dhammapada* 190-2.
[13] D. Mitra, *Sanchi*, pp. 46-47.
[14] M. Zin, *The Kanaganahalli Stupa*, p. 192, plate 24.
[15] Ibid., p. 27.

above an empty throne.[16] Though sculpture cannot represent doctrines, the evoking of the First Sermon is evidence for the currency of its content at this time (third century BCE).

The archaeological record, then, from the third century BCE onwards, provides evidence of concerns directly arising from the fundamental insights attributed to the Buddha. It would appear that we can be confident that the doctrines that are supposed to have influenced Pyrrho were current at the time that Pyrrho was exposed to Indian philosophy. Both Pyrrho's ideas and the Buddha's were criticised and developed in detail in successive generations in their respective Indian and Hellenic traditions.

I have argued in another paper,[17] which I can do no more than summarise here, that Alexander's companion Anaxarchus, who is described in the sources as a pupil of Democritus and the teacher of Pyrrho, was similarly influenced by Buddhism. We know rather little of Anaxarchus, as none of his writings survives.[18] I have already drawn attention to a possible temperamental resemblance to Calanus. About his ideas, we know that he expounded the doctrine that there are infinite worlds – which prompted Alexander to regret that he had not yet conquered even one of them. Though this idea can be interpreted in various ways, one possibility is that it is derived from the Buddhist idea of an infinite succession of worlds. Anaxarchus is also said to have "likened existing things to a scene-painting and supposed them to resemble the impressions experienced in sleep or madness". That is, the world is illusory. The corollary of this is that if nothing exists, including no self, it is impossible to decide how to behave in daily life. One can only behave "as if", like an actor playing a part. Thus, the strict Sceptic is enacting a Buddhist life. The question whether, if there is no self, persons exist, is one that exercised early Buddhists and was answered affirmatively by the Pudgalavada school of Buddhism, which however did not survive the hostile arguments of its opponents.[19]

Anaxarchus' reputation for indifference recurs in the story of his reaction when being tortured to death by being pounded with iron pestles in a grain mortar: "Pound the pouch of Anaxarchus, you pound not Anaxarchus", he is supposed to have said.[20] This utterance can be interpreted in several ways. It was very popular with ancient Christian

[16] R. Knox, *Amaravati*, p. 130.
[17] R. Stoneman, "Four Ways of Reading Anaxarchus", forthcoming.
[18] The fragments – i.e., testimonia – are collected by Dorandi 1994.
[19] Priestley 1989.
[20] On Anaxarchus' death see Bernard 1984.

writers, who saw it as analogous to the endurance of the Christian martyr; this in turn had developed from the Stoic attitude to suffering, expressed for example by Epictetus (*Discourses* I. 1.24) who imagines a tyrant threatening the Stoic sage: "'I will cast you into prison'. 'My wretched body, rather'…. What should we have at hand on such occasions? Why, what else than to know what is mine, and what is not mine, what is within my power and what is not?"'[21] But some Roman philosophers, including Cicero and Seneca, believed this philosophic indifference to suffering and death derived from Epicurus' belief that the sage is actually happy under torture. An Epicurean, as an atomist, could also hold that the tortured sage has no self, there is only a congeries of atoms being rearranged. This view was also held by some Indian ascetics.[22] It is, I believe, possible that Anaxarchus' endurance of suffering was encouraged by what he had learnt of Buddhism, and his experience of Calanus' own self-immolation in Pasargadae.

My final example is of a rather different kind. The Indo-Greek king Menander, who reigned in the second century BCE, some 150 years after Alexander's expedition, became the hero of a canonical Buddhist work known as the *Questions of King Milinda.* In this the king poses a series of questions about Buddhist doctrine to the sage Nagasena. The questions are well-conceived and enable the sage to expound all the major Buddhist doctrines quite systematically. The subject of no-self comes up right at the start of the discussion (40), followed by the puzzle about continuity of persons (63: if the self is not continuous, how does the doctrine of karma work?).[23] Later come the subjects of craving and perception (82-6), and the technical question of inference, which Greek sceptics continued to worry at for centuries.[24] The tetralemma makes an appearance (206), and the idea of Pyrrhonian indifference is discussed (297). The idea of the body as a mirror, a field of dreams, is also discussed (II.160). One might almost say that Milinda is putting just the questions that Anaxarchus or Pyrrho might have put to Calanus; and from the Buddhist Nagasena he is getting well-argued answers.

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[21] Epictetus, *Discourses* I.1. 24 and 21. A similar argument is used by Dandamis in response to Alexander's threats in Palladius, *Life of the Brahmans* II.17: see R. Stoneman, *Legends of Alexander the Great*, pp. 42-43.

[22] Filliozat 1967.

[23] On the inescapability of karma, see *Dhammapada*, pp. 127-28.

[24] The question arises because of the insistence of Epicurus (among others) that all sense-perceptions are 'true' or 'real', because they are our only source of information about the outside world. Yet it seems that some perceptions can be false. The literature is considerable; for my own discussion See Stoneman 2020.

Some earlier scholars believed that the Milinda-Questions might originally have been a Greek work, translated into Pali.[25] This idea has been thoroughly discredited by now, not least by Olga Kubica;[26] but the possibility remains that the work reflects something genuine about the historical Menander.[27] On his death, the king was revered and his relics distributed among a number of stupas, suggesting that he was accepted as a real hero of Buddhism. It is not far-fetched to imagine him taking an interest in Buddhism, the dominant religious tradition in north-west India, and engaging in discussion with sages, as so many rulers before and after him, from Alexander and Aśoka to Akbar and Dara Shikoh,[28] would do. Thus, Menander takes his place among the Greeks who were influenced by Buddhist philosophy.

In this short chapter, I have been able to do no more than throw out a few ideas and suggest a few pointers in the study of Greek interactions with Buddhist philosophy. But I hope I have persuaded you that the fact of such interaction is incontrovertible. In a controversial lecture, entitled "Why is there philosophy in India?", Johannes Bronkhorst (1999) proposed that philosophy developed in India as a result of the arrival of the Greeks, who first showed the Indians how to construct a logical argument and to debate a point; before that, according to Bronkhorst, Indian thought had consisted of woolly cosmological speculation and unproveable ideas like karma.[29] To me it is clear that the Buddha was not only a great religious teacher but also a sharp and analytical thinker. The debates that his preaching initiated were truly philosophical, and they found fertile ground among the Greeks who encountered them. It may not be too much to say that Indian Buddhist philosophy and Greek Scepticism are parallel developments from the same roots.

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[25] W.W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, pp. 432-36; Derrett 1967.
[26] O. Kubica, "Beyond Influence", pp. 197-99.
[27] A thorough survey is Bopearachchi 1990. See also O. Kubica, op. cit., pp. 192-94.
[28] On the latter two see e.g., A. Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, pp. 113-15.
[29] Seaford rejects this characterisation of pre-Buddhist thought and finds the *Upanishads*, for example, also philosophically sharp.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

BENGALI RECEPTION OF GREECE IN THE COLONIAL ERA: SOME FACETS

SIRSHENDU MAJUMDAR

"But the Greeks remain in a fastness of their own"
—Virginia Woolf, "On not Knowing Greek".[1]

"Anyone today may have deep respect and love for a particular modern nation. But those who feel the attractions of the universal man, those who understand human history as a single and undivided entity, and along with this, among modern educated men, those who have the fortune of having come in contact even with a little of the Greek mind through any of the areas of history and politics, philosophy and thought, literature and the arts, to them only Greece can be a second home for the world of thought and ideas." So wrote Sunitikumar Chatterjee, one of modern India's seminal minds. Chatterjee was India's leading linguist, a polyglot and polymath who himself had learnt Greek while in France, apart from scores of other languages. But he refuses to agree that France could be a second home for intellectual cultivation. He adds that if he were offered the choice of a second home outside India and a period of history to live in, then he would choose Greece of the fifth century BCE. All the finer things of modern European civilisation, he argues, are a contribution of ancient Greece. While ancient India reflects some of the virtues of the Aryans, ancient Greece shows other aspects of the Aryan people.[2] He proceeds to add that after several centuries, it is the same mind that through modern Europe is exercising its influence on his kinsmen, that is, on Indians. The more India comes in contact with this liberal, truth-seeking and loving

[1] V. Woolf, *The Common Reader*, p. 39.
[2] S. Chatterjee, "Socrates", *Probasi* (1922), p. 646 [translated from Bengali].

mind, the more it will help in the awakening and well-being of her national consciousness.

The part of Chatterjee's essay (1922) cited above is not from an independent account of the relationship between ancient Greece and India; it forms the opening section of the review of the first volume of a Bengali translation from original Greek of some of the Platonic dialogues. Chatterjee's review appeared in the elite Bengali periodical *Probasi* edited by Ramananda Chatterjee. As far as is known, this is the first sustained translation into Bengali of a Greek philosophical text. Its author, Rajanikanta Guha, was a professor of Philosophy at Calcutta University having served in several other colleges. The first volume of the book, with the title *Socrates*, was published in 1922 by Calcutta University for use by students. But the first volume does not contain the Socratic dialogues; rather it gives a detailed history of ancient Greece as a preparatory reading for Greek, or for that matter Platonic, philosophy. The author explains the need for the long introduction to Greek civilisation of the fifth century BCE as the context for understanding Socrates' life and ideas: "We fail to understand a great man unless we have knowledge of the time he is born, grows and attains fullness."[3] He regrets that, there being no book in Bengali on Greek history, he had to undertake the task before proceeding to write on Socrates. He refers to Prafullachandra Bandopadhyay's book *The Greek and the Hindu* (discussed below), but the book went out of print after its second edition was published nearly forty years ago.

Guha had learnt several languages including Sanskrit, English, Greek, Latin and French. The Socratic dialogues which form the content of the second volume of his book are translations mostly from Greek texts. Interestingly enough, Guha also adopts a dual approach to the pronunciation of Greek names. While he follows the original Greek usage for names with which the Bengali reader is not familiar, for others, that is, for those names with which the Bengali reader is familiar through English, he retains the Anglicised pronunciation. For example, he uses Plato for Platon, but adopts the Greek pronunciation for Aeschylus. He admits that he has not been able to maintain a consistent principle in the transcription of Greek names, adding that such a consistency is impossible in case of foreign names. Guha thus brings into focus one significant aspect of cultural translation.

The second volume, published in 1925, contains the actual translations. It has three sections: the first section deals with Socrates' life; the second contains the translation of the trial and death of Socrates; and

[3] R. Guha, *Socrates* vol. 1, p. i [translated from Bengali].

the third contains gleanings of Socrates' teachings from Xenophon. The quotations from Greek literature in the first section and the entire second and third sections are translations from Greek. Nothing strange, the dedication to the book should also contain a few lines from Plato in Greek. He has also added sections on Greek philosophers from Thales to Plato in order to give a comprehensive idea of Socratic philosophy.

Guha, however, does not evade any comparison between Greece and India in his book. The first relates to the comparison in terms of the formation of a nation. He claims that ancient India could not unite to form a nation, but like the Greeks, the different Sanskrit literary and scriptural texts and Hindu festivals brought people from different parts of India together. This gave them a semblance of unity, though he concludes that India is, after all, a geographical expression. Another comparison is between Greek and Sanskrit drama. He points out the obvious fundamental difference that there are no tragedies in Sanskrit; another significant difference is that there are no timid characters in Greek drama. In both kinds of drama, the emotional expressions are controlled, but what is extremely characteristic of Greek drama is that it inspires a national feeling, while such an impulse is absent from Sanskrit drama. In fact, Greek and Sanskrit drama are so different in character that neither can be said to be an imitation of the other. But Guha's signal contribution lies in the comparison he draws between Socrates and Gautam Buddha. He rightly makes the claim that no such comparison has been made earlier. We shall note below that Oriental scholars from William Jones onward have made suggestive comparisons between Hindu and Greek gods and goddesses; comparison between the Homeric epics and the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have also been made. But Socrates and the Buddha? The fundamental difference between Socrates and the Buddha, Guha submits, are that while the former was a believer in God and in the immortality of the soul, the latter did not believe in the existence of the soul or any extra-sensory consciousness. But what is very curious in Guha's argument is his conclusion that while the Buddha enunciated a comprehensive philosophy of life, Socrates' ideas were not comprehensive in that sense. Socrates had given birth to several schools of thought, but he did not show the paths to different problems of life. In Buddhist literature, the Buddha has been hailed as omniscient, but Socrates was, all his life, a simple-hearted seeker of truth. Here lay his glory.[4]

[4] Rajanikanta Guha, *Socrates* vol. ii, pp. 423-433.

But it is important to return here to Chatterjee's review cited above. He applauds the author's adoption of Greek pronunciations of the names and regrets that the Latin names are used for the Greek ones in Western Europe. He argues that Greek pronunciations should be easy in Bengali as all the sounds of Greek are also pronounced in Bengali. For him, the Greek Platon is more sonorous than Plato. Nonetheless, he takes a purely linguist's view when he suggests that Guha might have followed ancient Greek pronunciations as determined by linguists and used in Europe instead of adopting the Greek pronunciations as used in England. Chatterjee also mentions some of his disagreements regarding the Bengali forms of certain names such as Aphrodite which the author has spelt in closer proximity with Sanskrit words, which has led to an error in the meaning of the word.

These remarks show us the intensity of learning in classical languages in the Bengal of the times. Chatterjee's review is more important in the sense that the long review of Guha's second volume, published in two parts of *Probasi* in 1925, carries a detailed discussion of Guha's translation of Greek philosophical concepts. The reviewer, Maheshchandra Ghosh, was a vastly learned man in philosophy and well-versed in several languages including Greek. He taught in schools, and was given the title of Vedantaratna (meaning, a jewel of Vedanta scholarship) for his learning in Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. He observes that Guha's book is the first of its kind in Bengali, and this fact must have led to the book being reviewed by such a distinguished man of learning as Sunitikumar Chatterjee. But his long review, in which he himself displays such wealth of knowledge, at once marks him out as a man of deep learning. The review begins with an examination of Greek pronunciations rendered into Bengali. The reviewer lists eleven books on Greek pronunciation and grammar that he has consulted to arrive at the correct pronunciation in his review. The first part of the review is a discussion on the nature of Greek sounds. Then he proceeds to point out the wrong translations into Bengali of Greek terms and concepts. For example, Guha has translated *daimon* into a word in Bengali which would suggest an evil spirit, while the word for Plato has a divine implication.[5] But one would be astounded to note the scholarly evidences that Ghosh cites to drive home his ideas. It is neither possible nor desirable to incorporate all of Ghosh's criticisms, but a reading of the review would fascinate any reader with the rigour of scholarship that Ghosh has marshalled. However, what is of greater interest is the fact that a reply to Ghosh's review, rather a "protest" of the

[5] Maheshchandra Ghsoh, "Socrates", *Probasi*, 1925, pp. 390-395,

errors that Ghosh committed in his elaboration of the methods of pronunciations, was made by Sukumar Sen, another leading linguist and scholar of Bengali literature. Sen was himself a polyglot, and had written, apart from several other books, a primer for Latin for Indian students. He wrote a four-page rejoinder to Ghosh, explaining, with citation from several European linguists, the points where Ghosh went wrong. But Ghosh had his own arguments which were printed in the same issue of *Probasi* in which Ghosh's review was published. However, with Ghosh's reply, the editor refused to publish any further arguments on Greek pronunciations.[6] While a reading of Ghosh's review could make one who could read Greek say with Virginia Woolf, "It is useless, then, to read Greek in translations",[7] the entire debate speaks for much of what went on in Bengali intellectual circles regarding Greek.

Guha, however, had other works to his credit. In 1911, he had translated from the original source, Megasthenes' *India*. The original Greek text was lost, but excerpts from it are available in works by Arian, Strabo, Diadorus and other writers. In 1846, a German professor, E. A. Schwanbeck, put together from other texts extracts from Megasthenes, and it was translated into English by M McCrindle in 1882. Guha follows the original text of Schwanbeck, and even translates Schwanbeck's Latin introduction. Though he does not fight shy of acknowledging his indebtedness to the English translation, Guha achieves the double feat of displaying his ability to tackle both Greek and Latin simultaneously. There is no evidence of any Bengali having done this earlier. Incidentally, and quite strangely, Guha follows two patterns in translating Greek and Latin names into Bengali. While he retains the Anglicised forms of the names with which Bengali readers are familiar from English translations, he retains the original Greek and Latin forms for names that the Bengali reader is supposedly not familiar with. For example, he himself notes that it would be ridiculous to use Homeros or Plinios. From this, it seems clear that he had abandoned this approach for pronunciation of Greek names and had gone closer to Greek pronunciations in his *Socrates*.[8]

My intention of beginning this essay with a relatively unknown work and its reviews is to give a glimpse of the Bengali intellectual response to ancient Greek culture in colonial Bengal. My essay is not the first of its kind, for excellent book-length and extensive studies of the

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[6] See *Probasi*, 1925, pp. 701-709 for Sukumar Sen's protest essay and Ghosh's rejoinder [both in Bengali].

[7] V. Woolf, "On not Knowing Greek", p. 59.

[8] *Megastheneser Bharat Bibaran* (Megasthenes' Account of India) trans. R. Guha (1911).

Bengali response to Western classics have been carried out by Alexander Riddiford[9] and Phiroze Vasunia[10] respectively. While Riddiford's book is a path-breaking study of the nineteenth-century Bengali poet Michael Madhusudan Dutta's appropriation of Graeco-Roman classics, Vasunia's book takes into account the response to this culture in India in the colonial times. Incidentally, writings in Bengali on several aspects of ancient Greek culture emerged during the historical period of the so-called "Bengal renaissance" of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. My essay is thus a tentative attempt, in an archival way, to show some of the facets of the Bengali academic, literary and popular appropriation of, and response to, ancient Greek literature and thought during this creatively and intellectually rich period for Bengal.

It would be worthwhile to mention at this point that the migration of Greek scholars and Greek texts into Renaissance Italy and other parts of Europe in the fifteenth century does not merit any analogy with the study of Greek or Greek literature in the Bengal of our period. Nor did the study of Graeco-Roman literature (in the original and in English translation) initiate any form of what Coluccio Salutato called "studia humanitatis"; Salutato explained that he found the word "humanitas" in Cicero to denote a kind of cultural and intellectual refinement and at the same time a courteous disposition. In Italy, everything started from the initiative of a group of humanists who in the late fourteenth century attempted to recover the Greek roots of Latin culture as the study of ancient Greek had almost completely disappeared from the West during the Middle Ages. So, a teacher from Byzantium, Manuel Chrysoloras, went to Florence from Constantinople to teach Greek; there was a wave of enthusiasm initially but that waned very quickly: few of his first pupils managed to learn the language, and none of them apparently was interested in continuing Chrysoloras' mission and teaching Greek. The only exception was Guarino Guarini, who, however, learned Greek not in Florence but in Constantinople. He wrote a simplified grammar that for some decades was the most widely used textbook in Renaissance schools of Greek. Guarino and his pupils helped in improving the situation, but Greek never reached the spread and popularity of Latin as it was still the language of the church, administration and culture. Also, the most conservative clerics and intellectuals considered Greek as the language of pagans and heretics and

[9] Alexander Riddiford, *Madly after the Muses: Bengali Poet Michael Madhusudan Dutta and his Reception of the Graeco-Roman Classics*. This investigation was largely influenced by Ruddiford's book.

[10] Phiroze Vasunia, *The Classics and Colonial*; also the collection of essays "India, Greece and Rome: 1757 to 2007" (eds. Edith Hall and Phiroze Vasunia).

despised Greek literature as lacking the dignity and moral values of Latin literature. Still, the rediscovery of Greek had a huge impact on Italian culture, influencing literature, philosophy, the sciences, and the visual arts. For example, it became possible to read Aristotle in the original and to rediscover Plato, as well as medical and scientific texts that were either ignored or known only through translations from Arabic.[11] While this mention of the position and teaching of Greek in Renaissance Italy would appear superfluous here, I would like to refer to it below in order to demonstrate what happened in Bengal.

It is a curious fact of intellectual history that the interest in the study of Greek and Greek literature was propelled by the Greek community that had a settled presence in Bengal since the middle decades of the eighteenth century. The initial historical contact between Greece and India was established with the invasion of Alexander. Historians have pointed to several influences which Greece exercised on ancient Indian culture. In fact, Megasthenes wrote a book entitled *Indica* in which he gives a vivid account of the India he saw. Many of the records of the later Greek settlements in India are lost, and some historians have reconstructed the picture from the scanty evidential remnants. The Greek community that settled in Bengal in the eighteenth century had migrated from the Thracian cities of Adrianoupolis and Philippoupolis which were ravaged during the Turko-Russian war. Other communities also arrived in Bengal in British ships from the Ionian and Aegean Islands. The Greeks, an estimate says, comprised a population of 800,000 in eighteenth-century Calcutta. The histories of Greek settlements in Bengal can be obtained from scholarly works such by Paul Byron Norris (who is a Greek by descent and whose forebears had lived in Calcutta and other cities of India)[12] and by Demetrios Th. Vassiliades.[13] What may be of import in this essay is that Norris spends an entire chapter on Corfu and attempts to draw up certain analogies between life in Corfu and Calcutta during the nineteenth century. The Greeks in Calcutta and Dacca (now the capital of Bangladesh) were mostly traders, and set up their own community establishments including a church and a cemetery, but despite their long presence in Calcutta, they are not known to have opened schools for the propagation of either their religious beliefs or their rich intellectual and cultural legacies.

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[11] I owe this information to Federica Ciccolella. Also, her "The Greek Donatus and the Study of Greek in the Renaissance".

[12] Paul Byron Norris, *Ulysses in the Raj*.

[13] Demetrios Th. Vassiliades, *The Greeks in India: A Survey in Philosophical Understanding*.

The connections between ancient India and ancient Greece were known in educated circles. But it is a curious fact of intellectual history that a renewed interest in Graeco-Roman languages and cultures was awakened through a revived interest in the study of Sanskrit undertaken by British orientalist scholars who came to serve in India for the East India Company. The foundational intellectual reinforcement in Calcutta in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, came from Sir William Jones, who can be called the father of British oriental scholarship in India. Jones, who had gained a reputation as an orientalist scholar in England, came to Calcutta as a judge in the service of the East India Company at the age of twenty-three. He soon immersed himself in the study of Sanskrit. In 1786 he delivered a lecture at the Asiatic Society which had been founded in Calcutta in 1784. In this lecture, famously known as the third anniversary discourse, Jones spelt out the affinities between Sanskrit, Greek and Latin. Jones's memorable passage reads:

> The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs, and in forms of grammar, than could have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which perhaps, no longer exists.[14]

He adds that "the Gothick and the Celtick" and "Persian" also belonged to the same family. Jones's postulation, if not exact, is held by comparative philologists and linguists about Indo-European group of languages. Two years later Jones would publish an essay "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India" in which he sketches out certain similarities among the deities worshipped in Greece, Rome and India. Thus, Jones's postulations brought into closer proximity the antiquity of ancient cultures of Europe and India and included the Indian (Hindu) tradition within the ambit of what is called "classical". The grounds for a common origin and a shared culture with the West were thus established. Nonetheless, while Jones's theory of linguistic affinity indicated a common origin for all peoples, it was taken over by later comparative philologists such as Frederic Max Müller, and the linguistic now took on an ethnic turn and the idea of an Aryan race, emerging from a common home in southern Russian and spreading over the land from northern India to Western Europe, gained currency. As Thomas Metcalfe remarks, "In this process language, culture, and physical

[14] W. Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* vol. 3, p. 34.

biological features that distinguish race became inextricably linked; and the Aryans as a race became sharply demarcated" from Semitic and black African peoples.[15] But, if the British and Indian belonged to the same racial group, then why were they unequal? The British administrators propounded a theory of racial degeneration in which they argued that the Aryan branch that came to India had lost its racial purity through intermingling with aboriginal people and had lost vitality because of the climate.[16]

These ideas poured into the Bengali mind through British and European authors. It may be remembered that our period is also marked by a "revival of Hinduism". It is evident that a number of books and journal articles carried the title "The Greek and the Hindu"; this indicates that since Hindus, despite being of similar racial origin, were not treated at par with the British, they claimed their own esteem through a shared glory with the antiquity of ancient Greece. But these writers were simultaneously aware that Hindus had not been able to achieve the same height in political and social spheres as the ancient Greeks and so they often elevated India's spiritual achievements over those of Greece. In fact, one of Bengal's and Indian's most iconic figures, Swami Vivekananda, beleaguered by the morose state of India under colonial domination, and aggressively attempting to awaken in Indians a sense of patriotism, followed the Orientalist approach and coupled the Greeks and Hindus together as originating from a single Aryan source and yet marked by differences in approach to life. For him, the Hindus who settled in India found the climate so hot that they were unable to work and thus "became introspective". The other branch of Aryans who settled in Greece, found the "climate and natural conditions more favourable" and "developed the external arts and outward liberty". The fundamental difference between the Hindu and the Greek, argues Vivekananda, is that, while the former sought spiritual liberty, the latter sought political liberty. Both, however, in his view, were wrong, but the Greek more so, since "to care for spiritual liberty and not for social liberty is a defect but the opposite is a still greater defect." For Vivekananda, "liberty of both soul and body is to be striven for".[17]

While Vivekananda wrote a short note, there were longer comparative studies one of which we shall look at. In 1884, Prafullachandra Bandyopadhyay wrote a book-length comparison in Bengali titled *Greek o hindu*. Bandyopadhyay was a polyglot and had taught himself Greek,

[15] Thomas R. Metcalfe, *Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 82.
[16] Ibid., p. 83.
[17] Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol vi, pp. 85-86.

Latin, English, Sanskrit, Telegu and Oriya. He carried out research on the ancient Hindu political system and had written among others a study entitled "Valmiki and his Times". He had also written a scholarly essay on Krittibas, the author of the Bengali *Ramayana*. Bandopadhyay, in the footnotes to his chapters, refers to works by many celebrated works by European scholars – Pritchard's *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, Max Müller's *Lectures on the Science of Language*, Buckle's *History of Civilization* and Grote's *History of Greece*, among others, to support his arguments. Moreover, the book is marked by an astounding breadth of learning. Its author quotes from all conceivable Greek and Sanskrit texts to illustrate his ideas. He combines historical analysis with a theory of predestination that led to the separation of the Greeks and Hindus and its consequences. But his basic premise is the racial theory disseminated by orientalist scholars, and despite a common origin and despite being of the same race, it is the climate and other circumstances in India that has let the Hindu down in his material achievements. But in the conclusion, he overturns the position and holds out hope for the Hindu. He argues that the original, when mixed with other elements, leads to two consequences: if the original element is less powerful, then its accretions bring about such transformation that the original is lost sight of. The other process is when the original is powerful; then its acquisitions are unable to obliterate the original and it shines. This was what had happened with ancient Greece and ancient India respectively. Greece has now merged with the cultural streams of other European nations. Therefore, even if its image is glamorous, since it has now been permeated with lesser elements of other cultures, it has lost the glory of its antiquity. Rome has emerged from Greece and the rest of Europe has emerged out of Greece and Rome. So, Greece can be traced in Europe. India, however, has not been able to extend herself so much. But now the market for the union of the East and the West has been set up. So, if we can now take advantage of this moment of exchange then we can be sure that the glorious day for India to occupy a place among nations will soon arrive.[18]

Bandopadhyay was not in any scholarly profession; he worked in the postal service. But his works have all the marks and depth of scholarly rigour. But such works were not only meant for perusal in colleges or universities; they were aimed at the general educated reader as well. In fact, a survey of the literary periodicals of the time would show that writings on Greek literature were not infrequent. For example, the elite periodical *Probasi* carried several essays on Greece. Some of the titles in

[18] Prafullachandra Bandyopadhyay, *Greek o hindu*, pp. 314-412.

English translation would be "Aeschylus", "Megasthenes's India", "Hindu and Greek", "A Greek Statue", "Plato's Idealism", "Education in Ancient Greece", "Ancient European Art", "Contributions of India to Greek Civilization", and so on. I shall give some idea from one essay, "Aeschylus". In this essay, the author gives a descriptive account of all the seven plays of Aeschylus, the trilogy of *Oresteia* coming at the end. While he observes that Aeschylus is the greatest tragedian before Shakespeare, he also applauds Aeschylus' nationalism in the play *The Persians*. He suspends any comparison with Sanskrit drama till the end. Having discussed the Oresteian trilogy, he concludes that though there are matricidal figures like Orestes, there are no matricidal, debauched figures like Clytemnestra in Indian literature. By portraying such a character, Aeschylus, despite being a great dramatist, seems to be disdainful and hateful towards women. "Even soft-hearted characters like Electra, Antigone and Cassandra have been portrayed with some weakness."[19] Such essays on Greek literature were not written frequently, since those who studied Greek literature in schools and colleges read it in English and naturally followed English books. In fact, while orientalist scholars awakened a new interest in Greek and Roman literature, their impact was mostly restricted to scholarly circles. Beyond this, it was the British education system that introduced Indians to these classics.

Harish Trivedi has made an unfounded claim that Western classics were not taught in schools and colleges in colonial India.[20] But as I noted above, it was English education that familiarised a larger number of Indians with the classics. Many of the schools in early nineteenth-century Calcutta taught Greek and Latin, apart from French and German. Latin probably frequently scored above Greek in terms of the number of students, but Greek was essential for those who would train for the priesthood. For example, the Annual Examination notice of 1825 of the famous Durrmtollah Academy, founded and run by the Scotsman David Drummond (hence the popular name, Drummond's Academy), declared that there were twenty-seven students for Latin while Greek had three.[21] The famous Hindu College established in 1816 (later Presidency College, now Presidency University) did not teach Greek or Latin, but Greek and Roman history and literature formed an essential part of the course. Thomas Edwards, biographer of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, the brilliant

[19] Rajanairanjan Dev, "Aeschylus", *Probasi*, 1910, pp. 692-696.
[20] H. Trivedi, "Western Classics, Indian Classics: Postcolonial Contestations".
[21] In Saktisadhan Mukhopadhyay, ed. *Kolkatar adi acharjya: David Drummond, Teacher of Derozio* (*The Earliest Teacher of Calcutta: David Drummond, Teacher of Derozio*, p. 228.

and fiery Eurasian poet-teacher, records the curriculum at Hindu College in 1828 when Derozio was a teacher; it included Goldsmith's *History of Greece, Rome and England*, Russell's *Modern Europe*, Robertson's *Charles the Fifth*, Gay's *Fables*, Pope's version of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Dryden's Virgil, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and one of Shakespeare's tragedies.[22] When Calcutta University was started in 1857, it taught both Greek and Latin as languages at the honours and master's level. The Calendar for 1858-59 of Calcutta University lists eleven languages, namely, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Urdu and Burmese for the Bachelor of Arts degree examination; out of these, students had to choose one along with English which was compulsory. The syllabi included a selection of poetry and prose from "classical or standard works or authors". The Greek authors included Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Thucydides, Xenophon, Demosthenes, and Plato. The examinations were conducted by means of "printed papers". Candidates for the 1859 BA examination in Greek were asked to study *De Corona* from Demosthenes, *De Corona* from Aeschines, and *Medea* of Euripides.[23]

A decade later, the number of languages for the BA course came down to Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Sanskrit and Arabic, with English remaining a compulsory language. A candidate could be eligible for the Honour course in any of these languages; the examination would involve translation from the chosen language into English and the other way round, comparative grammar, and an essay on the history of the literature in the language. From 1870, the syllabus for Greek became dynamic. In 1870, the prescribed texts were Thucydides *Book 1*, Sophocles' *Ajax* and Plato's *Crito*; but in 1871 there were changes. While the authors were retained, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Plato's *The Republic* Book 1 were now prescribed. The syllabus for the Honour course was quite heavy: Homer's *Iliad* (first twelve books), Pindar's Olympic Odes, Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* and *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone*, Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Medea*, Aristophanes' *Knights*, *Clouds* and *Frogs*, Herodotus, Bks II & III, Demosthenes' Orations against Leptines and Meidias, Plato's *Republic*, and Aristotle's *Politics*. Incidentally, the Premchand Roychand scholarship was introduced in 1869; candidates who intended to sit for the scholarship examination could write their examination also in Greek and the ten subjects for the scholarship. The teaching of, and examination in, Greek continued even into the 1930s. The

[22] Edward, Thomas, *Derozio, the Eurasian Poet, Teacher and Journalist*, p. 66.
[23] *Calendar of Calcutta University*, 1859, p. 60.

university Calendar for 1932 mentions one, Kiranchandra Mukherjee, a Bengali, as the paper-setter for Greek at the Intermediate level; but the responsibility for the master's level was assigned to G. H. C. Angus and W. C. Wordsworth. The latter was also paper-setter and examiner for Latin. Greek and Latin continued to be taught at the university, and the Calendars of 1947 and 1956 testify to it. In post-independence India, the responsibility for teaching Greek and Latin fell on Indian linguists like Sunitikumar Chatterjee and Kshitischandra Chatterjee. The latter was a distinguished scholar of Sanskrit, but had also written a small book, *Greek Proverbs for Indian Students*, in which he gave Sanskrit equivalents of the proverbs.

It may be noted that English education was introduced in 1835 after the Orientalists lost to Anglicists; but British administrators, whether Orientalist or Anglicist, were trained in Greek and Latin whether in schools or at Haileybury College (formerly the East India Company College) before they arrived in India. As such, they naturally had an inclination for the classics and wanted the same to be taught in India. But opinions could differ. The review of the Calcutta University Calendars for 1859-60, 60-61 and 61-62 by C. H. Tawney brings to light the mood of some of the British administrators. Tawney himself had learnt Greek, Latin and German before he arrived in India. In India, he fell in love with Sanskrit like his predecessors William Jones and Henry Colebrook, and translated many Sanskrit works including the *Kathasaritsagar* into English. He was a professor of History at Presidency College and was later appointed Registrar of Calcutta University. Tawney's review is worth quoting at some length:

> In Calcutta of course it a subject to which great importance is attached… The great value of Sanskrit is as throwing light on the comparative grammar and comparative mythology of the Indo-Germanic races. We would hail with delight the oriental Benfey, we would gladly sit at the feet of the Bengali Max Muller. But in order that such a man should arise among the Hindoos, Greek and Latin must be taught according to the improved philological methods of the present day, and of course long before that time French and German will have become the recognized part of the university course, and no educated Bengali will write in his native language…. The principal object, as far as we can learn, with which we encourage Bengalis to learn Sanscrit, is that they may be able to translate English philosophical terms into their native language….
>
> Although Greek and Latin cannot be made a part of the regular pass course, it may perhaps be a subject of regret that so few candidates present themselves for honours in these subjects.'

Even a superficial acquaintance, Tawney adds, 'would have a beneficial effect on the mind of the native philologer'. There is no 'peculiar nobility attaching to these studies', composing 'Latin verses no more elegant accomplishment' than framing 'Sanscrit slokas' but over the last three centuries the finest intellects of Europe have engaged in the critical study of Greek and Latin languages and the noblest triumphs of scholarship have been won.

While Tawney speaks of the triumphs of Greek and Latin, he also advocates the study of German and French literature which, he argued, is as good as Sanskrit. His argument for the replacement of Sanskrit with French and German is that this would enable English history to be seen through other nations. "Why should not the French language and the history of England during the last hundred years be substituted for the histories of Greece and Rome?"[24]

Nonetheless, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Calcutta (now Kolkata) had a vibrant culture of Greek learning. The *India Gazette* of 8 March 1824 went as far as declaring Calcutta to be the new Athens. Commented the paper's editor:

> Calcutta ought to have its name changed. Instead of being called the city of Palaces, it should be denominated the city of Poets. Parnassus is no longer the haunt of the muses. They have fled to Calcutta, and the Hoogly has become the Castalian stream. The reader of the *India Gazette* cannot but have observed, long ere now, the copiousness and verity of the poetic talent which has adorned, and to this hour continues to embellish, its pages…. Like the Rustic mentioned by Horace, we have at times supposed that the poetic stream would run itself out—but no—*Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis aevum*…
>
> Yes, this is truly the *Augustan* age in Calcutta.[25]

One former student of Hindu College, Peary Chand Mitra, who went on to write the first Bengali novel *Alaler gharer dulal*, even remarked of the spirit of Hindu College of his times in these words: "they (the students) were required to utter *mantras* or prayers but instead they repeated lines from the Iliad."[26]

Even if calling Calcutta "Athens" is the response of an over-enthusiastic editor of a paper that carried literary pieces, it would be not be an exaggeration. Learning Greek and Latin could sometimes be a passion,

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[24] C.H Tawney, "Studies of the Calcutta University", *The Calcutta Review*, Vols 41-42, 1856, pp. 300-303.
[25] Cited in Vasunia, *Classics and Colonial India*, p. 301.
[26] Peary Chand Mittra, *A Biographical Sketch of David Hare*, pp. 17-18.

and those who could not avail of the institutional privileges to acquire these languages would struggle for it on their own. One such classic case is that of Rajanikanta Guha whose book, *Socrates*, we discussed above. In his posthumously published autobiography (Guha died in 1945), Guha records his struggle to acquire these languages. This is the only personal account of its kind in Bengali that I could trace. Wrote Guha:

> I found out from the University Calendar that no Bengali had yet obtained an M.A. in Latin. So, I became ambitious of becoming the first Bengali to obtain an MA in Latin. With this in view, I started studying Latin soon after I had taken up the job of a college lecturer. I was already acquainted with the first part of *Principia Latina*. I then made a selection from the textbooks prescribed for the BA course. Then I studied the texts prescribed for the years 1895, 1896 and 1897 for the MA course. I studied twenty-two books out of the twenty-six prescribed for the MA course. But when the results of 1896 were declared, I found that only one Bengali candidate, Harinath De, had obtained first class.

Unfortunately, Guha could not take the final examination to fulfil his ambition, but he adds that his study of Latin on his own had borne fruit, and he had given private tuition in Latin to two students. "On 27 September 1897, I started my Greek lessons with *Initia Graeca* Part 1". But he fell ill, and resumed his Greek lessons on 26 May 1899 and completed the book. "Then I adopted the same method as I had done in the case of Latin, and resolved to start with a primer and then take up the books prescribed for the MA course." But because of personal reasons, he could not continue his studies on a regular basis. He adds that "But I had studied Greek for many years, and my cultivation of literature is an outcome of the study of Greek." He, however, regrets that "whether it is because Greek is more difficult to acquire, or because of other reasons, I could not acquire Greek as much as I had acquired Latin."[27]

Harinath De, whom Guha mentions in his autobiography, was a man of enviable abilities. He acquired twenty European and fourteen Indian languages, standing first in Greek at Cambridge in 1897. Guha's struggle to acquire Greek and Latin bore fruit in his books; but there were others who, in spite of their modest situations, acquired these classical languages, though they are not known to have made any creative or scholarly use of their linguistic acquisitions. For instance, Akshoykumar Dutta was a prolific man. While he was a student at the well-known Oriental Seminary, he learnt Greek, Latin, Hebrew and German from an

[27] Rajanikanta Guha, *Atmacharit* (Autobiography), pp. 334-336 [translated from Bengali].

Englishman, Hardman Geffroy, who taught at the school kept by Gourmohan Adday. One of his biographers notes that while he was taught Pope's translation of the *Iliad* at school, he read the *Aeneid* on his own. His reading of Homer gave him the idea that the Greeks were initially idolatrous, but later on, realising that such a religion was false, abandoned this path and followed a finer religion. If this could happen in the case of the Greeks, then Hindus could also realise the falsity of their religion and follow the Greek way. Nothing strange that a man with such a conviction at school would later on join the Brahmo fold then being led by Devendranath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. The Brahmos were worshippers of the Supreme Brahma and did not believe in idolatry. Devendranath had founded a society called the Tattwbodhini Sabha, and Dutta was made the first editor of its mouthpiece, the periodical *Tattwabodhini Patrika* (that which imparts philosophical knowledge). The paper mostly published articles which had a philosophical bent; it does not seem to have published much on Greek or Roman philosophers. But Jyotirindranath Tagore, one of Rabindranath Tagore's older brothers, had translated for the paper five of the discourses of Epictetus. Jyotirindranath was fluent in French, but is not known to have learnt Greek. He presumably translated Epictetus from English, as he had written an account of the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius, the first Bengali book on the Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher.

Like Akshoykumar Dutta, Shyamacharan Sarkar, a teacher of English at Sanskrit College, was educated at St Xavier's College where he had learnt English, Greek, Latin, French and Italian, though he had his initial lessons in Greek history and Greek grammar from Ramgopal Ghosh. He also learnt Urdu and Arabic. Rajnarayan Basu, a leading intellectual of the times and a Brahmo, notes in his *Autobiography* that when he joined the Brahmo fold, he found that one of Devendranath Tagore's closest companions in the fold was Shyamacharan Sarkar. Sarkar was famous for his eloquence. Basu compares his eloquence with that of Demosthenes and recalls the incident that when the King of Macedonia had come to attack Athens, Demosthenes had sarcastically addressed them saying, "Athenian women, you are no longer men." Shyamacharan is also said to have begun one of his addresses at the Brahmo meeting with this, "Women of Bengal! You are no longer men!" Anecdote apart, we need to understand the impulse that worked for these men. Dwarakanath Vidyavushan taught Sanskrit at Fort William College. He purchased a printing press on which he printed a history of Greece in Bengali that he had translated from English. Amritalal Basu, a famous Bengali playwright, had learnt Greek and Latin from his uncle Pyaremohan Basu. Names of

such intellectuals and writers of the Bengal renaissance who learnt Greek and Latin can be multiplied. The extent of their learning is not always known, and many of them, to reiterate, did not publish anything based on their classical linguistic acquisitions. Was it then sheer amateurism that inspired them to go through the rigours of learning Greek and Latin, or did they look upon these languages as a sort of *humanitas*, a kind of refinement and elegance acquired, an Indian version of *studia humanitatis*, as it were, that Cicero and Salutato spoke of?

While histories and literary texts of ancient Greece and Rome in English translation were taught at Hindu College, Bengali translations of these histories from English were also made for schools. We have already referred to Dwarakanath Vidyavushan's history of Greece and Rome. One major translation made in 1833 was by Khettro Mohun Mookerjee. He prepared a translation of Goldsmith's *History of Greece* for use in schools; the book was published under the patronage of the Calcutta School-Book Society which was engaged in publishing school textbooks in Bengali. In the introduction to his book, the translator states that the histories available in India are full of fantastic descriptions and so readers do not derive from these books the benefits of studying real history. That is why Indians have no alternative other than reading translations of European history. But why Greek history? For the translator, it is the history of Greece, more than the history of any other nation, which is more edifying. Even Europeans interested in acquiring knowledge of Bengali will derive benefit out of this book. Mookherjee's translation thus serves the double purpose of giving Bengali readers the idea of what history and the writing of history should mean, while helping Europeans to greater acquaintance with the Bengali language. The absence of historical works in India, particularly in Bengal, was a complaint shared by other distinguished men such as Bhudev Mukhopadhyay and Ramendrasundar Trivedi later in the century, which made it essential for Bengalis to turn to Greek and Roman (and also English) histories to learn the art of historical writing as much as to be edified by the lessons of history.

If some of the English-educated Bengalis did not put to any use their Greek and Latin learning, a few others did in their creative writing. For by that time, Indians were writing poetry in no small quantity, and some Indians were also writing in English. Many of these Indians went to English schools in Calcutta and to Hindu College where their creative potentials were awakened by Derozio and some others, among whom stands out David Lester Richardson, himself a poet and an outstanding teacher. When he prepared a voluminous anthology of English poetry for Indian students titled *Selections from the British Poets* (1840), he included

also excerpts from Greek and Roman poetry as also from French and German poets. Thus, Hindu College students as much as other students had a feast of European poetry before them.

Though Kashiprasad Ghosh is credited with being the first Indian to compose verse in English, it was Derozio, the teacher-poet, who gained a larger reputation for his poetry. Derozio did not write in Bengali, but his poems were infused with a nationalist spirit, and some of his poems had themes and motifs from Greek literature and history. Derozio went to David Drummond's school and could have picked up Greek and Latin as a student, but I have not been able to trace any definite source to substantiate the claim. Vasunia has discussed at some length Derozio's Hellenism and its complexities; Derozio and, for that matter, those Indians who were brought up with an English education, were under the spell of the English Romantic poets who served as models for their own poetry whether written in Bengali or English. They imbibed the spirit of the Romantic Hellenism of Byron, Shelley and Keats. Vasunia comments that Derozio combines in his poetry Romantic Hellenism with the "Graeco-Orientalism of Byron and Shelley by virtue of his own hybrid subject position in colonial India."[28] Derozio, it needs to be mentioned here, was of mixed Eurasian descent, his father being a Portuguese Indian and his mother, English. It was because of this that he could write poems such as "Address to the Greeks", "The Greeks at Marathon" and "Thermopylae" on the one hand and poems like "The Ruins of Rajmahal" and "The Fakeer of Jungheera" on the other.

However, it was Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the first of the modern Bengali poets, who was deeply immersed in Greek, Latin, Italian and English literature and appropriated these for his own poetry. Dutt began writing poetry in English, but soon switched over to his native tongue to which he brought the paraphernalia of his classical learning and produced works that became models for his younger generation. Dutt probably had his initial lessons in Greek and Latin at school, for in one of his letters to his Hindu College friends (where he himself studied), he wrote "Where is my Eutropius? (Roman History in Latin) Gour [Gourdas Basak]?" and again in another letter, "Let him keep my Eton Grammar… but let him return my Eutropius."[29] These letters not only show what Dutt read but also, despite the fact that no Greek or Latin was taught at Hindu College, those who attended it learnt the languages elsewhere. Riddiford has shown us from archival sources the nature of the Greek and Latin texts

[28] Vasunia, *Classics in Colonial India*, p. 301-303.
[29] Gholam Murshid, ed, *The Heart of a Rebel Poet: The Letters of Michael Madhusudan Dutt*, p. 23, p. 39.

Dutt had to study at the Bishop's College.[30] But the most significant aspect of Dutt's poetic talent is his ability to appropriate his classical learning for Indian subjects while also bringing in several features of Sanskrit poetry and poetics and medieval Bengali poetry. To this must be added the ethos of Romantic Hellenism whose shaping influence on Bengali poets of all hues has already been referred to. Let us look at one close parallel in Romantic Hellenism between an English Romantic poet and a Bengali poet. Timothy Webb notes that from "1770s onward a clear division between those who could read Greek originals and those who could not, became acute". An exemplary case is that of Keats. In the flush of enthusiasm that is displayed in the celebrated sonnet "On first looking into Chapman's Homer" he not only celebrates Homer but also pays tribute to Chapman, through whose voice he listens to the arch-poet. In a letter to J.H. Reynolds Keats wrote: "For although I take poetry to be Chief, there is something else wanting to one who passes his life among Books and thoughts on Books – I long to feast upon old Homer as we have upon Shakespeare, and as I have lately upon Milton – if you understand Greek, and would read passages, now and then, explaining their meaning, 't would be, from its mistiness, perhaps a greater luxury than reading the thing itself."[31]

On the other hand, Madhusudan Dutt had the privilege of learning and reading Greek; but his attachment to the language and Homer (and for that matter Virgil and Milton) was no less overwhelming than the Greekless Keats. In a letter to his friend Rajnarain Basu, Dutt, while composing his magnum opus, *Meghnadbadh kavya* wrote: "It is my ambition to engraft the exquisite graces of the Greek mythology on our own; in the present poem, I mean to give free scope to my inventing Powers (such as they are) and to borrow as little as I can from Valmiki. Do not let that startle you. You shan't have to complain again of the un-Hindu character of the Poem. I shall not borrow Greek stories but write, rather try to write as a Greek would have done."[32] Keats, through Chapman, delved deep into the "wide expanse" of deep-browed Homer's demesne and breathed its "pure serene", but he ultimately settled for Milton whom he rewrote in his *The Fall of Hyperion*. The Bengali poet, with the privilege of Greek and English, combined in his poems Homer and Milton, and even aspired to write like a Greek, to be a Homer to Bengal, so to say. Priyaranjan Sen comments that "The study of European epics presented

[30] See A. Riddiford, *Madly after the Muses*, pp. 41-47.
[31] Timothy Webb, "Homer and the Romantics", pp. 304-305. Keats's letter is cited from *John Keats: Selected Letters*, ed. Robert Gittings, revised by Jon Mee, p. 85.
[32] Murshid, *The Heart of a Rebel Poet*, p. 141.

the Bengali writer with a new model which he tried to copy in his language. Some of these epics were taught in schools in selections, while others made their way to those who were enamoured of the new studies. It is not surprising, therefore, that attempts began to be made in translations and adaptations of the strange models."[33]

Thus through these appropriations, as Riddiford has rightly pointed out, Madhusudan Dutt has performed "multifarious subversions"[34] while also creating new models of poetry for his younger generations. In his *Meghnadbadh kavya* (1861, The Slaying of Meghnad, the killing of Ravana's son Indrajit in the Sanskrit epic *Ramayana*), Dutt has combined strains from Western epic poetry, from Homer, Virgil, Tasso and Milton with the Sanskrit epic *Ramayana.* In *Padmabati natak* (1860) he dramatises the story of the golden apple, the Judgement of Paris as the Judgement of Indranil, and comments in a letter that it is "the Greek story of the golden apple Indianised."[35] Dutt's most sustained Greek appropriation is his *Hektor badh* (1871, The Slaying of Hector) which is an abridged prose rendering in six chapter of the *Iliad*, 1-12. The work is incomplete as, if complete, it would have been 12 chapters, since Dutt has compressed each of the two Homeric books into one. Through his poems and appropriations, Dutt not only brought the Western classical epics into the larger imagination of Bengali readers, but also enkindled a desire for writing in the epic strain in poets who followed him.

Moreover, he was also partly responsible for making Homer triumph over Virgil in the larger imagination of Bengal. Vasunia has argued that the overwhelming precedence of Homer over Virgil in colonial India was due to the fact that the Greek epics, since the days of British orientalist scholars, who argued for a common originary language and culture, were embraced by the Indian literati as well. Moreover, the Sanskrit epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, he began to be read in comparison with the Homeric epics, though there were debatable points raised by some Western scholars. For example, Albrecht Weber speculated that "the rape of Helen and the siege of Troy have served as a model for the corresponding incidents in the poem of Valmiki."[36] Weber does not extend his "imagination" far to think of analogies between the characters, say, of Hector and Indrajit, or Agamemnon and Sugriva, or between Patroklos and Lakshmana or even between Odysseus and Hanumana. He does not indulge in guessing that Valmiki could have read Homer. But he

[33] P. Sen, *Western Influences in Bengali Literature*, p. 130.
[34] Riddiford, *Madly after the Muses*, p. 54.
[35] *The Heart of a Rebel Poet*, p. 121.
[36] A. Weber, "On the Ramayana", pp. 120-24, 172-82.

puts forward a "simple assumption" based on the Buddhist text *Milindapanha* that with Alexander's invasion of India, the encounter between the Greeks and Indians may have brought the latter into "acquaintance" with the Homeric story. To Weber's contention, Kashinath Telang gave a scholarly rejoinder, calling into question the possible analogies between Homer and Valmiki, and the Buddhist borrowings, and concludes his refutation with the idea that it was rather the Sanskrit epics that could have exercised some influence on the Homeric epics.[37] On the other hand, Riddiford argues that since the American Revolution, the Augustan imperial idea had lost its position (so also Virgil) to the Hellenic ideal. This caused a shift from Virgil to Homer at the literary level.[38]

It is not known whether Bengali writers who appropriated, translated or adapted Homer's poems were aware of this ideological shift in British imperial politics, but Homer's presence is overwhelming on the Bengali literary map. This is demonstrated by the fact that, apart from Henry Sargent's translation of *Aeneid I* into Bengali, no translations of Virgil are attested in standard catalogues of books published in Indian languages before 1947. We have already mentioned Madhusudan Dutt's contribution. In fact, a number of translations of Homer's epics, particularly, of the *Iliad*, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were undertaken, though from English. Anandachandra Mukhopadhyaya translated from Pope the first two books of the *Iliad*, in a Bengali form of couplet published as a single volume in 1863. Mukhopadhyay remains close to the English original both in form and content for his text is bilingual. I do not know of any other bilingual edition, whether in English or Greek.

This was followed in 1874 by Anandachandra Mitra's *Helena kavya* (the poem of Helena/Helen), published in two volumes. It is not a faithful translation, but within the larger framework of Homer's narrative, Mitra has Indianised his own narrative: read independently of the *Iliad*, it would give the impression of the poem being the poet's own free creation. It is rather strange that the poem received no attention, partly because it was severely denounced by the distinguished periodical *Bangadarshan* started by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay in 1872. The reviewer of *Helena kavya* criticised its style as far removed from that of Dutt's and for the unacceptable new Bengali coinages.[39] But another paper applauded it as giving the impression of reading Dutt in the original. This makes amply clear how the ghost of Homer, refracted through Dutt, stalked the imaginative

[37] Cited in Vasunia, *Classics in Colonial India*, pp. 48-49.
[38] Riddiford, *Madly after the Muses*, p. 14.
[39] See *Bangadarsha*n, 1285 (1878), pp. 48-50.

landscape of Bengali poetry. In 1908, Jogendranath Kavyavinod published a full translation of the *Iliad* and used the couplet form, much in the manner of Pope's English translation. Though the translator does not state it clearly, it is evident that he made the translation from Pope's or Dryden's versions and did not follow the Greek original.

Alongside poetic translations, popular prose forms of the Homeric epics also appeared. Nabakrishna Ghosh retold the stories of the *Iliad* (1912) and the *Odyssey* (1916). Ghosh's retelling of these epic stories were actually translations or adaptations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by William Lucas Collins, a Church of England priest and the founding editor of the series Ancient Classics for English Readers published by William Blackwood and Sons from Edinburgh and London since 1870. The Blackwoods published some of the most celebrated English writers, and, since 1817, had been publishing *Blackwood's Magazine*. Ghosh follows Collins in using Latin instead of Greek names, and like Collins, he also provides a list of the Greek and corresponding Latin names. Ghosh does this, keeping in view the popular readership for whom the stories were meant. Another feature of this retelling is Ghosh's occasional mention of analogies between the *Iliad* and the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. For example, he says that just as the fight in Lanka and the battle at Kurukshetra lie at the centre of the respective Indian epics, the battle of Troy occupies a similar position in the Homeric story. Ghosh, however, does not follow Collins absolutely; while Collins follows Homer closely, Ghosh begins his *Iliad* with Paris's seduction of Helen to make the story easier for the Bengali reader. Ghosh compares this seduction with Ravana's abduction of Sita in the *Ramayana*, but argues that while Ravana had a cause in that Lakshmana had cut off his sister Surpanakha's nose, Paris had no reason to take Helen away to Troy. But to the Greeks this seduction was not hateful as it was influenced by the gods. Thus, Ghosh interlaces the Homeric story with analogies from Indian epics to bring the story closer home to his Bengali readers, while also suggesting affinity between Greek and Indian ethical views. We might add that Collins himself occasionally adds analogies from English history, and this might have emboldened Ghosh to suggest the analogies between the Indian and the Greek epic. But Ghosh's *Odyssey* titled as *Odyssir galpo* (The Story of the Odyssey) is much shorter as it is meant for children; the introduction and the style are attuned to their reading ability. He does not seem to have followed Lucas's version, or may have further abridged it.

An intriguing fact of the Bengali response to Greek literature in colonial times is the fact that Greek plays were not translated or adapted, though Bengal had a very buoyant theatrical milieu during this time. One

of the possible (and plausible) reasons could be the predominance of Shakespeare in the Bengali dramatic imagination. Even a celebrated playwright and actor like Girishchandra Ghosh adapted *Macbeth* for the stage, but not any Greek play. The catalogue of translations of European plays into Bengali shows the overwhelming presence of Shakespeare followed by others but in small numbers. The modern theatre in Bengal had its beginning in the late eighteenth century, (and this holds true for other parts of India) with Shakespeare's plays occupying a dominant position. It was only in the mid-twentieth century that Greek tragedies began to be adapted alongside other European playwrights from Ibsen to Brecht and beyond.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

GREECE AND THE EXPANDING EAST: MODERN ASPECTS OF THE "SILK ROAD"

SOPHIA KALANTZAKOS

Since the formation of the modern state, Greece has been caught up in a binary struggle between its East-West orientation. It was in the nineteenth century, however, that a national myth began to dominate historiography in order to attract Western backing for the revolution against the Ottoman empire and in support of the independent modern Hellenic State. It was attested that Greeks were descendants of the glorious ancient Hellenes. Moreover, their ancient past constituted the foundation of western civilisation itself. The Greeks rose and valiantly fought to break away from the tyrannical "Turkish yoke" to regain their independence after four dark centuries. With great care, Greek-Orthodox Christianity, the dominant belief of the Greek cultural community, was woven into the ancient heritage.[1] This myth constructed on the notion of Greece as a civilisational state confirmed and crystalised its western orientation.[2] Still, though Greek society perceives itself as European, it simultaneously criticises the "West" for being religiously or culturally different, at times prejudiced toward the Greeks and even occasionally siding with the nation's rivals.

Despite this scepticism and mistrust of the West, however, Greeks do not perceive themselves as Eastern, particularly because Christianity (which constitutes an integral part of Greek identity) – in their imaginary – ends largely at the Greco-Turkish border. Moreover, politically speaking, while modern Greece continued to look Eastward, it never viewed its engagement as an opportunity, but rather as a defence against persistent contention, challenges, anxieties, irridentist threats, religious fanaticism, and backwardness rather than modernity. Since the early 2000s, however, while Greece has remained both committed to and critical of its relationship

[1] H. Millas, *The EU and the East-West Paradox: The Case of Greece and Turkey*.
[2] Th. Veremēs and G. Koliopoulos, *Greece: The Modern Sequel*.

with its western partners, it no longer takes a near-sighted view of the East. With growing agency, Greece has become more confident and acts as a responsible member of the EU and NATO. It has Europeanised its international relations and considerably strengthened its bilateral ties with the United States.[3] Notably, however, its view of the East has also expanded. Greece appreciates that beyond Turkey, Cyprus, and the Middle East lie a host of powerful countries that are increasingly reconfiguring the global order in the twenty-first century. A number of Gulf states, India, but most importantly China, are now actors and partners of growing importance to Greece, and Athens has been courting favour and building up its ties with them.

In recent years, for instance, dynamic exchanges with the major Gulf players, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have become more frequent, transcending the purely economic to include security, politics, culture, and people-to-people engagement.[4] In 2022, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, came to Athens on a state visit as the two nations declared their commitment to building strategic relations and economic ties. Moreover, in September 2022, the UAE was the country of honour at the 86th Thessaloniki International Fair.[5] Furthermore, the Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, also visited Athens in July of 2022, while a deeper engagement with India has also been underway.

This chapter, however, will focus on the dynamic and expanding ties between Greece and China that deepened considerably after the People's Republic of China (PRC) invested heavily in the port of Piraeus and supported Athens during the debt crisis. The chapter will also interrogate why and how a small country, like Greece, chose to so publicly embrace the PRC in a period in which Global China's growing assertiveness has triggered a strong push-back by the United States and raised important concerns in Brussels. Moreover, it will examine whether Greece's decision reflects a fully studied strategic opening in a time of geopolitical realignments or if, in the end, for Greece and perhaps even for China, the partnership is purely transactional and opportunistic, even though the rapprochement is heavily shrouded in normative and civilisational language

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[3] Sp. Economides, *The Europeanisation of Greek Foreign* Policy, pp. 471-491. P.C. Ioakimidis, *The Europeanisation of Greece: An Overall Asses*sment, pp. 73-94. A. Chryssogelos, *Still Europeanised? Greek Foreign Policy During the Eurozone Crisis.*

[4] A. Huliaras and S. Kalantzakos, *Looking for an Oasis of Support: Greece and the Gulf States* pp. 49-76.

[5] Kathimerini (English edition), *UAE President's Visit to Athens Confirms 'Excellent Bilateral Relations'.*

to raise its status. The chapter concludes by suggesting ways for Greece to think more ambitiously and creatively about its relations with Beijing in order to bolster an EU-China strategic partnership in the light of the climate crisis, as well as contribute to an EU-China dialogue on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that will transform the developing world.

The era of Global China

China's spectacular rise has been a key concern for the major actors of the global power system for quite some time, prompting the US under Obama to initiate a strategic prioritisation of Asia.[6] Yet, until recently, the incorporation of China in the world economy overrode concerns that, at some point, China would become more confident, more assertive, and thus choose to become a contributor and shaper of the world order by aspiring to become a norm-maker rather than remain a norm-taker. Perhaps the overly optimistic assumption that China would inevitably resemble liberal democracies if it continued to globalise and open its economy to trade, lulled policy makers into a false sense of security. They underestimated the PRC's resolve and capacity to become a global economic power, and simultaneously maintain its one-party system; a system the west characterises as authoritarian, and the PRC describes as a consultative democracy.[7]

Under President Xi Jinping's administration, China no longer hides behind its developing nation status. While still focussed on domestic growth, it has made a play for global leadership and presents as a model for development worthy of emulation. As of 2013, China's launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offers a new global vision for the future that promotes global peace and prosperity. The centre of world power is thus not only shifting toward Beijing but, more importantly for China's rivals, the PRC is encompassing the world, reversing the direction of the "Silk Road" and building up its maritime connections to directly bridge (and streamline) geographically, economically, territorially, and perhaps even politically, Eurasia and Africa through the BRI. Its vision is backed by new institutions such as the AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) and the New Development Bank. The BRI, moreover, has solidified China's push to become a maritime power, through investment in commercial fleets and modern port infrastructures across the world. Across

[6] V. Cha, *The Unfinished Legacy of Obama's Pivot to Asia*; Bureau of Public Affairs Department of State (2009), *U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue.*
[7] J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics*; S. Walt*, Rising Powers and the Risks of War: A Realist View of Sino-American Relations.*

the BRI, China showcases its domestic successes as a model for replication in the developing world. Moreover, in his report to the 19th party Congress in 2017, President Xi announced that China was committed to forge "a new form of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation … to build a community with a shared future for mankind and an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity."[8]

Sino-European Relations

Though these developments impact on other major actors, China's global century finds Europe first in the line of fire because the BRI represents both an economic opportunity but also, perhaps, a noose around the Union's neck. The European Union has awoken to the fact that it will eventually need to confront China in the realm of ideas, values, and norms, in order to prevent becoming engulfed by China's ambition. Even so, the BRI is a project that Europe cannot afford to ignore as it seeks to create a unified free-trade space where products, services, and capital circulate unimpeded. It has also ushered in a bitter contest over who will control the tech imperium. The economic potential of the BRI aside, at each end of this connection route sit two actors, whose values and governance models, moreover, are significantly different. After all, the EU fully appreciates that the framework that accompanies and defines economic exchange is imbued by rhetoric informing the expectations of how strategic idealisations of bilateral ties should function.

Although Europe and China have forged a comprehensive strategic partnership since 2003, China's active global strategy has raised concerns in Brussels and among many member states. In 2019, a Commission report presented the adjusted frame for the EU-China relationship. It spoke of China as both a collaborator and also as a systemic rival, promoting alternative models of governance.[9] Even for the non-hawkish, China's global era has ushered in a fierce new wave of competition in technology, trade, finance, and development strategies.

Imbued in the operational logic of efficiency and win-win for its partners, China comes to the table with both money and convening power to offer enticements not only to the developing world, but also to EU member states, thus undermining EU cohesion. In fact, in a bold

[8] W. Shan, K. Nuotio, and K. Zhang, eds., *Normative Readings of the Belt and Road Initiative: Road to New Paradigms*.
[9] European Commission, *EU-China – A Strategic Outlook*.

recognition of a changing situation, some Chinese scholars like Zhang Weiwei assert that perhaps the West would benefit from Chinese ideas, claiming that "it may be time now for the West … to 'emancipate the mind' and learn a little more about or even from China's approach and the Chinese ideas, however extraneous they may appear, for its own benefit."[10] China has, moreover, been crafting a narrative by which it seeks to differentiate itself from western orthodoxy that often perceives itself as the supreme ideal of mankind.

Greece and China: Deepening Engagement

During this evolving geopolitical contest, Greece has embraced China as a partner, putting in considerable effort to raise the cachet of their bilateral relations. Relations were established in 1972 even before the junta regime collapsed, but at the time a more strategic policy toward China was hampered by the fact that Greece lacked Sinologists. Moreover, during the 1970s, China's principal concern was the containment of the USSR. It worried that a Turkish-Greek rift might undermine NATO, weakening the West's ability to limit Soviet reach.[11] After the fall of the junta, Sino-Greek engagement grew in the context of Sino-European Economic Community rapprochement. The two countries sought to strengthen bilateral ties in the fields of trade, maritime commerce, agriculture, and culture, and the Chinese expressed support of Greek efforts to join the European Community.

Since 2004, however, the Greek government has begun to actively pursue a more multidimensional foreign policy. It made a point of opening up beyond the Euro-Atlantic space to maximise its geopolitical location as a crossroads of three continents, aspiring to become a key trade, energy, and investment node in the global economy. Economic diplomacy took centre stage as a form of engagement with new partners.[12] This marked a notable and expanded eastern horizon in Greece's external relations. The Olympic games of 2008 in Beijing which were preceded by the Athens Olympics of 2004 brought the two nations closer together in an exchange of knowhow and culture, but also led to the deepening of

[10] W. Zhang, *The China Wave : Rise of a Civilizational State*.
[11] D. Chourchoulis, *Greece and the People's Republic of China in the Cold War, 1972–1989,* p.63-84.
[12] M. Skordeli, "New Horizons in Greek-Chinese Relations: Prospects for the Eastern Mediterranean", pp. 59-76.

diplomatic and economic collaboration, especially in the maritime sector.[13] By 2010, Greece and China had upgraded their relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

Greece, moreover, has publicly acknowledged its appreciation for China's willingness to invest in its flailing economy during the protracted debt crisis. COSCO winning the 2009 bid that gave it effective control over the port of Piraeus, and Beijing's purchase of Greek bonds when Athens most needed financing, changed the tide. Under Chinese ownership, the Greek harbour has emerged as the biggest container port in the Mediterranean and Europe's largest passenger port. China's ambitions are to make it the largest port in Europe, given that it constitutes the BRI's first entry point into the Union. Xi Jinping's visit to Athens in autumn 2019 demonstrated the importance that the project holds in the Global China era. Xi's words overflowed with good will in pursuit of wider economic cooperation in the light of the BRI, but notably also in support of Greece's quest to bring back the Parthenon Sculptures.

Since Xi's visit, the COVID pandemic and China's zero-covid policy put a damper on frequent interactions. Visits and scheduled events were postponed. Athens' early enthusiasm for greater collaboration gradually turned into frustration. Continual difficulties in increasing exports to the PRC, stagnant tourist flows, and the slow death of the 17+1 group of Central and Eastern European Nations cooperating with China, in which Greece is a member – though others have abandoned – are contributing to the lack of momentum in engagement efforts.[14] At the same time, the geopolitical contention which grew under Trump has skyrocketed after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Biden administration has accused China outright for its unwillingness to condemn Putin's actions, while the EU (though more circumspect) has expressed its chagrin over China's stance.[15]

In this increasingly charged climate, Greece will now have to calibrate more carefully its China strategy. Already, the Mitsotakis government has taken a much more open pro-US position, and strengthened its constructive engagement with its European partners and its security alliance with the French. At the moment of writing, however, Greece's solid position in the western alliance has not soured the rapprochement of

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[13] A. Huliaras, and S. Petropoulos, *Shipowners, Ports and Diplomats: The Political Economy of Greece's Relations with China*, pp. 215-230.

[14] China-CEEC, *Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries*.

[15] European Commission, *Statement by the President Following the EU-China Summit*.

Athens and Beijing. In fact, the two countries celebrated their 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties in a very positive atmosphere.

Some might argue that it is one of the better times in history to be a small state like Greece. Norms and institutions espouse the protection of sovereignty. Moreover, legal norms now give small states a voice in international organisations based on the notion of sovereign equality. Global open trade, some claim, has also given small states a chance to prosper – although this may be contingent on geography, governance, and level of development. Certainly, scholarly attention has grown in the study of small states, their agency (power) and capacity to act as one unit (actorness) as a consolidated power in international affairs, in part because so many small states are members of the EU. The dynamic of small states with respect to larger ones in the Union has been studied extensively – though scholarly literature continues to lack a common definition about the set of criteria necessary for a state to be characterised as small, because states are not all small in the same way.[16]

Greece, for instance, gains stature by being a member of the European Union. Its importance is boosted additionally through its participation in NATO. It has leverage because its location situates it in a newly discovered area rich in fossil fuels, but its border with Turkey – which aspires to regional power status and is interested in acquiring a stake in these resources – places it under constant threat, giving rise to recurring tensions in the Aegean. Moreover, Greece's view of itself as the cradle of Western civilisation that gave birth to democracy allows it to feel bigger than what it might seem at first blush.

Greece has successfully deployed its civilisational credentials, for instance, to put it on a more "equal" footing with China. This strategy has resonated with Beijing because it corresponds to China's repurposing of its own glorious past in a reversal of Mao's relentless campaign to erase it. Unlike those nations whose colonial past weaponised civilisation in order to subjugate other lands and people, Greece – unhampered by such a legacy – boldly extols its ancient greatness to enhance its stature and global standing.

This is why, at the China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai on November 5, 2019, Prime Minister Mitsotakis confidently underscored that:

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[16] J. Hey, *Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior*; T. Long, "Small States, Great Power? Gaining Influence Through Intrinsic, Derivative, and Collective Power", pp. 185–205; J. Radoman, *Small States in World Politics: State of the Art*, pp. 179–200.

> Greece and China look at each other respectfully as ancient civilizations going back thousands of years. Both countries have not just moved with the wheel of history they have shaped it. Confucius and Aristotle address fundamental issues regarding ethics, morality, and the notion of a virtuous life. The world, including political leaders would be very well served if they gained the prominence that they deserve. So we stand here today, representing cultures that left a strong imprint on the whole history of the world.[17]

For Greek diplomats and politicians, moreover, China's long and distinguished history is not only significant, but is perceived as accounting for the country's return to global power status. Importantly, however, the framing of two great civilisations as shapers of history, and of Chinese and Greek philosophers as contributors to ethics, morality, and the notion of a virtuous life, are welcomed by the PRC as they reaffirm China's own global narrative as a maker of history and an important contributor to a system of norms, ethics, and values that were not of western origin. In this way, the Chinese can contend that universalist western values are no longer exclusively shaping the discourse of the present and future.

China's decision to use its civilisational status as part of its global public diplomacy efforts[18] rests on a political analysis and strategy that goes back decades. In fact, the Communist Party of China intentionally adopted "civilisation" (*wenming*) as a distinctive and positive narrative for progress in socialist China.[19] After the reform period began, when it became increasingly necessary to find a way to bridge economic development with the preservation of the nation's "moral" integrity, the term has been encountered regularly throughout a wide range of communication media. Concepts of material and "socialist" spiritual civilisation introduced by Deng Xiaoping[20] evolved to reflect the nation's drive to rationalise

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[17] K. Mitsotakis, *Speech by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the Opening Ceremony of the China International Import Expo 2019 in Shanghai*.

[18] For more on the China's public policy goals see:
A. Doga, A. Lioumpas, and S. Petropoulos, *Grand Strategy and the (Re)Shaping of Greece–China Relations*, p. 215.
G. Zacharias, "China's public diplomacy: Evolution, challenges, and the Greek case", pp. 79-89.

[19] N. Dynon, "'Four Civilizations' and the Evolution of Post-Mao Chinese Socialist Ideology", pp. 83–109.

[20] "…we must build a high level of material civilization, raise the scientific cultural level of all ethnic groups, develop a superior, rich and multi-faceted cultural life, and build a high level of socialist spiritual civilization" (message delivered by Deng Xiaoping at the Fourth Chinese Literature and Arts Workers Representative Conference, 30 October 1979).

globalisation with nationalism, growing materialism, and socialist ideology, and to provide a way to preserve an ancient cultural tradition as part of the new socialist culture of China. The "civilisation" discourse continued to expand after the Deng era to include the notion of "political civilisation" (*zhengzhi wenming*) which was added by Jiang Zemin as a way to enhance the vitality of the Party and the State and arouse the initiative of the people.[21] Ju Jintao later introduced the goal of building a "harmonious society", which was subsequently linked to the concept of "social civilisation". The purpose of deploying the *wenming* concept has ultimately been to provide a pathway that bridges the market economy to socialist ideals and as a way to preserve the legitimacy of the Communist Party of China.

In the early 2000s, moreover, China began to worry about the impacts that unbridled growth and industrialisation had produced on its domestic environment. The government needed to respond clearly and with conviction, but also "ideologically" and thereby normatively, in order to convince and shepherd the public from a vision of economic progress as naked growth to one of development in "harmony" with nature. In 2007, the PRC introduced the notion of "ecological civilisation" which over time became China's call to action in order to green, decarbonise, digitalise, and make more sustainable its domestic economy in response to dramatic environmental degradation caused by forty years of breakneck industrialisation. What is striking about China's frame is that its climate action goals are intrinsically woven into an increasingly powerful narrative for national rejuvenation, the cornerstone of which is the achievement of "ecological civilisation". In 2013, President Xi Jinping made the linkage explicit, saying that "to move towards an era of ecological civilisation and to build a beautiful China are an important part of realizing the Chinese dream of the Great Revival of the Chinese Nation."[22]

"Ecological civilisation" (EC) thus captures the most current top-down imaginary, and claims to constitute the ultimate amalgamation of socialism, harmonious society, welfare, development, and a sustainable

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[21] "Developing socialist democracy and establishing a socialist political civilization are important goals in the building of a comprehensively well-off society" (Jiang Zemin to the First Plenum of the 16th Party Congress in November 2002). Political civilisation would focus on regulation, law, institution building and governance. It meant "institutionalisation of political processes, highly controlled political reform and maintenance of the primacy of the Party through reform of the Party itself."

[22] Pan Xiang-chao, *Research on Xi Jinping's Thought of Ecological Civilization and Environment Sustainable Development*.

approach to environmental resources. It is a fundamental piece of the national China Dream for the twenty-first century, that incorporates elements of China's ancient past, linking it to Daoist and Confucian traditions.[23] "EC" has been enlisted to meld together a common and more uniform national identity as the PRC moves from a civilisational empire to a nation-state. The language, norms, and cultural values shaping narratives of China's "ecological civilisation" interact, and compete, with other national and cultural ideals to recalibrate notions of progress and modernity in light of the Anthropocene era.

Evidence of the centrality of the civilisational discourse to China's public diplomacy, global outreach, and normative agenda in the light of the BRI can be found in Beijing's decision to become a founding member of Greece's *Ancient Civilizations Forum*, with the intention that it play an active role in promoting mutual understanding and inclusiveness among different cultures, races and religions. Through this initiative, China has been able to confirm its normative preferences for an international multilateral system, with the United Nations as its core, through a venue from which it can affirm that no civilisation is judged superior to another.[24]

A critical assessment of how China utilises civilisation to introduce and disseminate more widely its global normative preferences, for instance, has been largely absent. Greece, in fact, seems to be merely reiterating key themes that have been approved by China as the official language of the BRI initiative, drawing on the ancient accomplishments of Plato, Aristotle and Confucius as a way to strengthen its own contribution to the relationship.

In his comments to his Greek counterparts, President Xi Jinping, for instance, "called on the two sides to enhance people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and advocate dialogue and mutual learning among civilisations." His words were echoed back through President Pavlopoulos' remarks during Xi's 2019 visit:

> In a time where civilisations are showing tendencies of isolation and intolerance, racism, fundamentalism, and extremism are unfortunately gaining ground, our common initiatives such as the *Forum of Ancient Civilizations* and also the *Dialogue of Asian Civilizations*, offer concrete proof that both Greece and China see culture as a bridge for bringing peoples closer together, instead of using it to explain clashes in the name

[23] Ph. Ivanhoe, *Early Confucianism and Environmental Ethics*; P. Corne and V. Zhu, *Ecological Civilization and Dispute Resolution in the BRI*, pp. 200-216.
[24] K. Wang, *Ancient Civilizations Forum Meets in Beijing*.

> of dangerous and unrealistic ideological constructs such as the "Clash of Civilizations."[25]

After all, in Xi Jinping's declared vision, the BRI was born out of a concern that a globalised interdependent world, that should have been full of promise, has become increasingly contentious, robbing developing nations of the opportunities to escape systemic poverty. In a 2017 speech, Xi summarised his vision in the following way:

> From the historical perspective, humankind has reached an age of great progress, great transformation and profound changes. In this increasingly multi-polar, economically globalized, digitized and culturally diversified world, the trend toward peace and development becomes stronger, and reform and innovation are gaining momentum. Never have we seen such close interdependence among countries as today, such fervent desire of people for a better life, and never have we had so many means to prevail over difficulties.
>
> In terms of reality, we find ourselves in a world fraught with challenges. Global growth requires new drivers, development needs to be more inclusive and balanced, and the gap between the rich and the poor needs to be narrowed. Hotspots in some regions are causing instability and terrorism is rampant. Deficit in peace, development and governance poses a daunting challenge to mankind. This is the issue that has always been on my mind.[26]

For China, antiquity has, therefore, been but one building block used for the construction of a new universal normative frame by which to provide leadership and guidance as a powerful global actor. "Ecological Civilisation", which began as a narrative for internal consumption, is now increasingly projected globally as China's vision for continued development, going beyond sustainability to include politics and culture rhetorically in line with its ecological and climate leadership. At the centre of China's geostrategic thinking, "EC" embraces the aspirations of the developing world and gives them a seat at the table, while bolstering the PRC's leadership credentials based on thousands of years of contribution to world history.[27]

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[25] Καθημερινή, *Επίσκεψη Σι Τζινπίνγκ στην Αθήνα-Πρ. Παυλόπουλος: Εμβληματική αναβάθμιση της στρατηγικής σχέσης Ελλάδας-Κίνας*, 11 November 2019.
[26] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *Full Text of President Xi's Speech at Opening of Belt and Road Forum*.
[27] S. Kalantzakos, *China's Ecological Civilization: A National Narrative with Global Ambitions*.

Building a nuanced and thoughtful strategy into the future

In the end, how strategic and ambitious is Greece's policy formulation with respect to China, when it seems so narrowly designed to attract investment and extol ancient civilisational accomplishments as a point of convergence? Moreover, given the changing geopolitical environment, in which China has become the key adversary of the United States, is there substantial reason for Greece to strategise further, when interdependence is viewed increasingly as having been weaponised?[28] In Athens, policy and diplomatic circles insist that Greece is firmly committed to the United States and the EU, and that this has been made clear to their Chinese partners. Moreover, this commitment has been framed as a strength. Remaining close to the US and the EU means that the Greeks are trusted voices, and their thoughts on China may facilitate understanding in difficult situations. The Mitsotakis government, in particular, has been more careful and mindful, and has walked a fine line between its allies and its Chinese partners. This stands in contrast to the previous government of Alexis Tsipras which caused a stir in the EU when he vetoed a European Union condemnation of China's human rights record at the UN, refusing to endorse an EU statement criticising the crackdown on activists and dissidents under Chinese president, Xi Jinping.

On a strategic level, however, Greece cannot afford to alienate Europe or the US by overplaying its hand. The difficult relations with Turkey (because of the Cyprus issue and tensions in the Aegean) in addition to President Erdoğan's weaponisation of migrant flows into Greece (and thereby into the EU), constitute major foreign policy headaches. They, moreover, require the support of both the EU and the United States, particularly to lean on Turkey in order to avoid some major incident. Though security features as an item on the Sino-Greek cooperation agenda, the PRC has just now begun to project its military power, and has a declared policy of non-intervention. China is more concerned with ensuring uninterrupted trade flows rather than becoming embroiled in conflicts with a long history.

More importantly, Xi Jinping's increasing autocratic rule in China has resulted in pushback by competing powers. Since taking the helm, Xi abolished term limits for his presidency; extolled the absolute leadership role of the Party; touted the virtue of China's development model for other countries; cracked-down on Hong Kong; deployed a "re-

[28] H. Farrell and A. Newman, *Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion*, pp. 42-79.

education" and internment programme of the Uighurs; launched the Belt and Road Initiative; has sought to rival the US in technological innovation; openly militarised the South China Sea; and quarantined an astonishing number of people in response to the coronavirus while also cracking down on social media and the press. All these issues, and many more, have resulted in intense vocal criticism from stakeholders worldwide that include business, academia, defence establishments, and human rights activists.

Yet, while building a more nuanced and thoughtful strategy vis-à-vis China may not seem a likely strategic priority given these developments, it would constitute a lost opportunity for Greece, especially in the light of growing geopolitical contention. Even while the world is tackling Russian aggression, a period of hyper-competition that is prompting diversification, renationalisation, and reshoring of critical supply chains, an unprecedented energy crisis, lingering pandemic disruptions, widespread political instability including, within the United States and the EU, the most pressing challenge threatening the global commons remains the climate crisis, which is only worsening.

Scientific evidence has shown that it can no longer be ignored, nor can it be managed without the collaboration of major powers that include China. Herein perhaps lies an opportunity for Greece to finally become the bridge that it has always dreamed of being, one that fuses its own split orientation and simultaneously facilitates communication and exchange between the West and the East. There are a number of possible areas in which Europe will need to hold its ground against the wave of new norms, values, and governance structures that the PRC is putting forth, especially as they impact on relations with the developing world. Though Europe's worries about China's ambitions are real, it has not sought to break ties with the PRC. Importantly, because of worsening relations with the US, China too has been making efforts to rekindle its partnership with Europe, as the most recent 2018 White Paper clearly reveals.[29]

First and foremost, Greece should insist that collaborative responses to the climate crisis become a permanent thread throughout any negotiations, deals, or conversations it has with China. After all, Europe's climate leadership and ecological diplomacy remain the Union's calling cards. Second, with respect to the migration issue, China may be geographically removed, but the nature of its footprint in Africa may lead

[29] Ministry of Ecology and Environment, The People's Republic of China, *China's Policy Paper on the European Union*.

to further acceleration of migration flows. This is a major worry for Brussels and should be one for Greece. Moreover, while the maritime BRI holds economic opportunity for Greece, the digital belt and road is perhaps of even greater significance, ahead of the next wave of innovation that has ushered in the fourth industrial revolution. For Europe, the digital belt and road that China proposes raises questions of freedom versus firewalls, limits the range and forms of recognised knowledge production, sets limits to civil society's participation in policy formulation, and encourages a digital space that grows under the exclusive command and control of many more autocratic regimes that lie in the path of the BRI. It also represents a key battleground between the US and China. Greece has already taken a stand on this, by accepting major US investment from tech giants which are challenging China's reach.[30] Nonetheless, there is a role to play here, as the EU continues to set standards for transparency and personal data protection, so as to avoid being sandwiched between the US and China in their battle over who will control the tech imperium.

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[30] I. Bellow, "Tech Giants Turn to Greece", *EKathimerini*, 29 May 2022.

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APPENDIX

SOME NOTES ON LAWRENCE DURRELL IN GREECE, THE BALKANS AND THE LEVANT

RICHARD PINE

Introduction

In these notes[1] I intend to give examples of Lawrence Durrell's impressions of, and responses to, the landscapes, cultures and political conditions in places where he lived between coming to Greece in 1935 and leaving Cyprus in 1956, in order to provide a preliminary perspective on his Greek, Balkan and Middle-eastern experience, and to illustrate his lifelong emphasis on the need for a *rapprochement* between east and west cultures and mindsets. I begin with a statement by Lawrence Durrell from 1985 (when explaining the five-novel structure of his *Avignon Quintet*) which displays his fervent wish that the eastern context of his childhood and the western heritage in which he had been educated, could find accommodation:

> The two philosophies [east and west] are coming together in a head-on collision. The basic thing which differentiates them is determinism and materialism in the West and precisely [the] pentagram formation about human personality in the East.[2]

Durrell probably knew Radhakrishnan's *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (1939) and he certainly espoused its arguments.[3] This wish for

[1] These notes do not claim the distinction of an "essay"; I intend merely to set out episodically the views of Lawrence Durrell on the places where he lived or about which he wrote, between the years 1935 and 1956. Biographical details have been kept to the minimum necessary to situate Durrell in his various locations. I am grateful to Ian MacNiven for valuable comments on a draft of these notes.

[2] L. Durrell, interviewed on BBC Radio 2, 29 May 1985, quoted by Peter Baldwin, "From Pudding Island: a Personal View", p. 127.

[3] And he knew Krishnamurti's *Idealist View of Life* (1932).

accommodation, or mutual respect, became intense when he found Greece, and found *himself* in Greece, since he believed sincerely that Greek philosophy was permeated by Indian thinking. It was in Greece that Durrell realised the *need*, as well as the desirability, of this mutuality of east and west.

In the twenty-one years discussed in these notes, Durrell was both developing as a writer (a poet and a novelist) and, in order to earn a living, working for most of that time in the British foreign service. A brief biographical introduction follows.

Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990) was born in India, and at the insistence of his father (an engineer) was sent to London at the age of eleven in order to acquire an English education. He spent twelve years in England; after school he tried various occupations, but was concentrating on becoming a poet. Finding the English way of life distasteful, he was yearning for the India of his childhood ("The most wonderful memories – a brief dream of Tibet" as he wrote to Henry Miller).[4] He and his newly-wed wife, Nancy Myers, an artist, set up house in Corfu in the years 1935-39, in the expectation that Greece might enable them to live cheaply and productively and, in Durrell's case, provide a substitute for the "paradise" he had lost in childhood. His principal ambition, however, was to "discover" himself as a writer, and would later refer to Corfu as his "second birthplace", where he completed his third novel, but the one which he regarded as his first "real" book – "in which I first heard the sound of my own voice".[5]

That "voice" was to be his compensation for the loss of childhood: in the novel *Tunc* (1968) he had, I believe, expressed his own sense of loss when he wrote of "people deprived of a properly constituted childhood" who constantly experience a "buried hunger".[6] Elsewhere he wrote of "childhood with its gross psychological damage".[7] As we shall see, he succeeded, as far as was possible, in assuaging that sense of loss and damage in Greece; but it was to be exacerbated in both Egypt and Yugoslavia.

Durrell's recollections and impressions of Corfu were published in 1945 as *Prospero's Cell.* Leaving Corfu in 1939 due to the start of the war, the Durrells were briefly in Athens (where their daughter Penelope was born) before Durrell was assigned by the British Council to run a school in Kalamata, in the southern Peloponnese. Evacuating Greece in

[4] *Durrell-Miller Letters*, p. 51.
[5] L. Durrell, *The Black Book* [1973 UK edition], p. 9.
[6] L. Durrell, *Tunc*, p. 26.
[7] In a notebook for *The Avignon Quintet*.

1941 (just ahead of the German army) the Durrells arrived serendipitously in Egypt, where Lawrence was to spend the rest of the war, principally in the employment of the British Embassy as a press officer – a role he was to occupy in three other locations before his retirement from the British public service.

In 1945 Durrell (now separated from his wife) was posted to Rhodes, capital of the Dodecanese islands which, under British supervision, were being transferred from pre-war Italian control to the Greek state in 1947. As Director of Public Relations, he boasted to Henry Miller, "Not exactly Governor of these twelve islands, but damn near."[8] This led later to his book *Reflections on a Marine Venus* (1953).

The discontinuity and sense of displacement of Durrell's life next led him to a year (1948) in Argentina, where he lectured at the University of Cordoba at the behest of the British Council; he disliked both the climate and the landscape, but his lectures gave rise to a remarkable book of criticism, *A Key to [Modern] British Poetry* (1952).

Durrell was next posted as press attaché at the British Embassy in the Serbian city of Belgrade, then the capital of the Yugoslav Federation, where he lived with his second wife, Eve Cohen (a Jewish Alexandrian) from 1949 to 1952.

Durrell had conceived the idea for what would become *The Alexandria Quartet* and hoped to find a peaceful place in Cyprus to write it. Moving there in 1953, he bought and renovated a Turkish house, but the need of an income obliged him to take a teaching position at a high school in Nicosia, which led to his appointment as Director of Information Services for the British administration, 1954-56, at the height of the crisis in which Greek Cypriot nationalists demanded union (*enosis*) with the Greek state. The severity of the situation, and threats to Durrell's life, caused him and his companion (Claude Vincendon, also a Jewish Alexandrian, soon to become his third wife) to leave Cyprus for France, where he would live for the rest of his life, but always dreaming of India and making visits, as often as possible, to Greece. Out of Cyprus, Durrell wrote *Bitter Lemons* (1957), a bitter-sweet account of his dual life as both a government employee and a villager.

This brief account of Durrell's years from childhood until the age of forty-four helps to explain the sense of movement, displacement and exile which became a feature of a writer who craved stillness and, impossibly, a return to his roots, yet who was obliged to acknowledge the

[8] *Durrell-Miller Letters*, p. 186.

flux of his own life and the impossibility of establishing a domicile in which he could be secure.

A sense of exile

When interviewed by Marc Alyn, in 1970-71, Durrell was asked, "Would you say that your Indian childhood had any lasting influence on your approach to life?" He replied:

> I am, and I remain, an expatriate. That vague sense of exile has never quite left me. […] The expatriate carries his country within him, inside him: everywhere belongs to him, because he belongs nowhere.[9]

In 1988 he told me – with considerable exaggeration –

> My life has been tremendously lonely. I had no club life, no bar-room, no bistro. In the jobs I had I couldn't have adopted a bistro. It's been superficially very *mouvementé* [animated, thrilling, full of incident], but I've never had a *foyer*, a hearth, a home. Every time I've tried to build one the British came along and put a bomb up my arse.[10]

And at the same time (near the end of his life) he wrote in *Caesar's Vast Ghost* of his envy of the tramps of Provence (where he lived):

> that great brotherhood of scamps and contemplatives and dissenters […] peripatetic philosophers who had opted out of ordinary society in order to make an almost religious retreat

whose mindscape he described as *dromomania*.[11] He understood both their status as outsiders and their reasons for "opting out".

These brief examples help us to understand the empathy that Durrell developed on three levels: an understanding of the condition of those who are displaced and who retain an umbilical memory for the place from which they have been exiled; the sense of fluidity and the

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[9] M. Alyn, *The Big Supposer*, pp. 24-25. I am reminded of George Steiner's concept of the "writer-as-exile": "the *a priori* strangeness of the idea of a writer linguistically 'unhoused', or displaced or hesitant at the frontier": *Extraterritorial*, p. 14. Steiner also suggests that "the modern movement can be seen as a strategy of permanent exile" (p. 26) – a point we find also in Durrell's exilic experience in Egypt and after.

[10] Conversation with the author, 1988.

[11] L. Durrell, *Caesar's Vast Ghost*, pp. 22-24.

inevitability of displacement (expressed pithily as "the refugee habit");[12] and his lifelong search for what he called "the Heraldic Universe", which, simply put, represented an instantiation of poetic insight which defied movement in both space and time, and validated the individual as a poet.[13]

Durrell's experiences in Greece (Corfu, Athens, the Dodecanese), in Egypt (in both Alexandria and Cairo), and in the Balkans (travelling throughout the Yugoslav Federation) enabled him to appreciate the effect of landscape upon character (the title of one of his most persuasive essays is "Landscape and Character" – 1960) for which he became well-known as the writer of "spirit-of-place". As a poet, he saw the essence of a place and its people; as a diplomat, he was able to assess the political, as well as the social and cultural, aspects of the country in which he was located.

Durrell famously told an interviewer that he was "a poet who stumbled into prose";[14] he was also a writer who, due the accidents of war and exile, "stumbled" into diplomacy – a subject on which he was later to write satirically in his "Antrobus" stories ("sketches of diplomatic life")[15] and, on one occasion in California, to lecture facetiously on "Propaganda and Impropaganda".[16] In these dual capacities he was able to appreciate the cultural and political fortunes of Greece, the Middle East and the Balkans.

Durrell's appreciation of the writer's hinterland is experienced in three ways: firstly, in his "island" books (*Prospero's Cell*, *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, *Bitter Lemons* and, later, his synoptic *The Greek Islands*); secondly, in his "professional" writing related to his work as a public official (his articles on Cyprus published in *The Economist* and, in later years after his retirement from public service, in *The Times*; and his memorandum of a road journey southwards from Belgrade to Thessaloniki); thirdly, his fictions, both serious and "lightweight", including the "Antrobus" stories (published in three volumes 1957-66), *White Eagles over Serbia* (ostensibly a children's-story-cum-thriller, 1957), *The Placebo* (a draft of

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[12] L. Durrell, *Collected Poems 1931-1974*, in "In Europe - Recitative for radio", pp. 136-140.

[13] For a discussion of Durrell's "Heraldic Universe", see R. Pine, *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape*, chapter 4 ("Islomania") and R. Pine, "Lawrence Durrell's 'Heraldic Universe': the *Magnetic Island* and Self-Discovery" in R. Pine and V. Konidari (eds.), *Islands of the Mind.*

[14] Kenneth Young, "A Poet Who Stumbled into Prose" in Earl Ingersoll (ed.), *Lawrence Durrell, Conversations.*

[15] Published as newspaper features and subsequently in three volumes, collected as *Antrobus Complete*.

[16] Published in *Blue Thirst*, 1975.

what eventually became *Tunc*, and the only one of his fictions set entirely in Greece), *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-59), and *Judith* (originally a filmscript but published serially as a novel, 1966).

I will discuss Durrell's "impressions" of the Greek character, the wartime situation of the exiles in Egypt, the conditions under communism in Yugoslavia, and the *enosis* crisis in Cyprus, before exploring Durrell's assessment of the Palestinian conflict as he saw it in *Judith*.

Corfu, Rhodes and mainland Greece

When writing about Corfu, Durrell consulted several historical accounts – this was his usual preparatory method for an idiosyncratic synthesis of these accounts onto which he built his own responses to what he saw and heard. One of his sources for Corfu was *Four Years in the Ionian Islands* by Viscount Kirkwall (1827-1889), published in 1864. Kirkwall made the telling remark that "A Greek will never confess any fact which appears to tell against his country. Indeed, the general disregard of accuracy by that nation is one of their most lamentable characteristics, but it is no proof of the degeneracy of the race."[17] Durrell's own comments echo Kirkwall's, referring to the Corfiot peasants as "incorrigible thieves and liars".[18] He made a connection to the ancient Greeks: the *Odyssey* is "a portrait of a nation which rings as clear to-day as when it was written. The loquacity, the shy cunning, the mendacity, the generosity, the cowardice and bravery, the almost comic inability of self-analysis."[19] Thirty years later, when revisiting Greece, he would refer to its "operatic quality […] a kind of innocent, wide-eyed, passionate, romantic craziness, which went right to my heart".[20] It remains a remarkable summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the Greek character as it appears in today's political, social and economic crisis.

In a much later book, the synoptic *Greek Islands* (1978), Durrell allowed himself to become didactic (for the novice reader): "Among the most venerable words still extant you will come across words like 'man' – *Anthropos* means 'he who looks upwards'. In common use also are earth

[17] Kirkwall, *Four Years in the Ionian Islands*, pp. 54-5, 276.
[18] L. Durrell, *Spirit of Place*, p. 32.
[19] L. Durrell, *Prospero's Cell*, p. 59.
[20] "Everything Comes Right", interview with Peter Adam, in Earl Ingersoll (ed.), *Lawrence Durrell: Conversations.* At that time, Durrell was filming "Spirit of Place: Lawrence Durrell's Greece", directed by Adam and broadcast by the BBC in 1976.

(*gee*), sky (*Ouranos*) and sea (*Thalassa*)".[21] Returning to Corfu, he describes the Medusa – one of the finest examples in Greece – "you begin to realize the almost unimaginable antiquity of the Greek land and the Greek tongue […] One can see the shadow of the ancients shining through the fabric of modern Greek life."[22]

Durrell constantly emphasised this continuity of classical Greece in modern life: in 1975 he told Peter Adam: "Our language has changed so enormously in a few hundred years; Greek has remained almost constant […] It's one of the charms of Greece that one does feel the ancient gods are there, sometimes under another name […] It's the continuity – what the French would call the *perennité des choses.* It's the long-lastingness of essential beliefs".[23]

On a more serious note, which we should bear in mind in considering the recent austerity measures imposed by financial ruin, Durrell observes: "The Greek has lived for so long cheek-by-jowl with not simply adversity, in terms of a poor and rocky land, but with catastrophe, that he has learned how to shrug off the caprices of the merely historic, and hang on to his own internal fibre of spirit."[24] "Fibre", as with Philip Sherrard's analysis of the Greek "other mind" (above, pp. 28-31) incorporated the external factors such as *fos* (light) which were part of the imprinting of landscape or *terroir* on character. Of *light*, "this extraordinary phenomenon", Durrell says "one hears the word everywhere 'To Phos' and can recognize its pedigree – among other derivatives is our English word 'phosphorescent' […] In the depths of light there is blackness […Light] is the naked eyeball of God, so to speak […] Greek light […] the white dancing candescence of the sun on a sea with blue sky pouring into it".[25]

At the opening of *The Black Book* (written in Corfu, 1936-37), Durrell writes: "Today there is a gale, blowing up from the Levant".[26] This nugget of poetry, replete with the sense of movement and yet also of *stasis*, suggests Durrell's awareness, from this point onwards, of the Greek and Levantine worlds as one cultural as well as geographical whole.

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[21] L. Durrell, *The Greek Islands*, p. 26.
[22] Ibid., p. 34.
[23] "Everything Comes Right", in Ingersoll (ed.), pp. 167-68.
[24] *The Greek Islands*, p. 50.
[25] Ibid., pp. 18-21. On Durrell's attitude to Greek light and appreciation of the visual, see also R. Pine, "Lawrence Durrell and Greece" in *Lawrence Durrell's Woven Web of Guesses* and *Lawrence Durrell's Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988* vol. 1, Part Two: The Artist's Eye.
[26] L. Durrell, *The Black Book*, p. 19.

Like Sherrard, Durrell saw "landscape as a form of metaphysics";[27] "the distinction between matter and spirit, which we make, and which is essential to our philosophy, and which has led to our material advances, wasn't strictly a Greek foible at all. For them the material world was as much magical as the magical world. The *noumenon* and the phenomenon were perfectly mixed."[28] This has an echo of his view of the local priest, Father Nicholas, as "a great mythological character".[29] As Durrell well knew, there is a world of difference between "mythical" and "mythological", and seeing a local figure (and figurehead) as "mythological" was to confer a status on the living – a man who created his own "myth" without recourse to antiquity. As a creature of his landscape, Father Nicholas was both physical and metaphysical. Much later in life, Durrell was critical of the advent of television to Greece: as a lover of small places such as the village in Corfu where he had encountered Father Nicholas, he warned of the effect of a nationwide service dominated by a central organisation:

> all those very remote little villages which one used to know will now be glued to Athens. And of course Athens contains everything meretricious that London and New York can provide for it in terms of modern Greece. So inevitably it will have a radical effect on Greek manners of the old style.[30]

As an example of westernisation (which I have discussed in Chapter One), television would eventually have an even greater power and penetration than radio enjoyed at that time.

In Gostan Zarian, an Armenian writer whom Durrell first encountered in Corfu, Durrell admired the insistence on the *human*, the qualities that constitute real people (the *Anthropos*, on earth between sea and sky) as distinct from receptors of others' ideas and opinions. In his essay on Zarian (1952), he commented that Zarian "recreated the atmosphere and flavour of the submerged life that human beings live when their hearts have been conscripted under the flag of the false god, Matter".[31] This

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[27] L. Durrell, *Prospero's Cell*, p. 15.
[28] "Everything Comes Right", p. 168.
[29] *Prospero's Cell*, p. 43. For more of Durrell's appreciation of Corfiot character, see *Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988* vol. 1, Part Five (ii).
[30] L. Durrell, *Blue Thirst*, p. 15. The Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) began television transmission in 1965 but its footprint was limited until the 1970s, when Durrell was speaking and regretting its extension to the "remote little villages".
[31] "Constant [*sic*] Zarian – Triple Exile", in *From The Elephant's Back*, p. 230.

would be a cardinal point on which he would be *ad idem* with George Seferis in appreciating the human dimension of humanity.

Durrell, as an exile, was particularly conscious of the expulsion of ethnic Greeks from Anatolia in 1922, since he met several of them, including George Seferis and Elie Papadimitriou, when all of them were exiled, yet again, in Egypt. In 1948-49 he wrote a "Preface" to the first translation of Ilias Venezis' *Aeolia*, which tells the story of the expulsion of Greeks from Anatolia through the eyes of children.

> The tragedy of his expulsion from Anatolia still weighs heavily upon the heart of the modern Greek, whether he is a metropolitan or an exile from the bountiful plains and wooded mountains of Asia Minor. He cannot forget it. If he is an exile he returns again and again to Anatolia in his dreams: he broods upon it as Adam and Eve must have brooded upon the Garden of Eden after the Fall […] But it is more than the injustice, the cruelty, the madness of the whole episode which sticks in the mind of the modern Greek. It is also a sense of a lost richness, a lost peace of mind.[32]

In order to complete this overview of Durrell's encounters with Greece, I will move now out-of-chronology to his time in the Dodecanese islands, while he was part of the British administration transferring the Dodecanese islands from previous Italian control to the Greek state. After Egypt, to be once again among Greek people was a relief: "[I] can't tell you what a feeling of a cloud lifting to get out of Egypt," he told Miller.[33] "You can't capture what the silence keeps erasing, a permanent fluidity at the edges of the world" he wrote to a friend from Egypt, Gwyn Williams.[34]

Here, he made his first acquaintance with "Brits abroad", whom he would also meet in Cyprus. It was his first immersion among English people since he left Britain in 1935. "The people here! My God the people! The administration has certainly finished me as far as the British are concerned. No greater collection of defrocked priests, ex-jockeys, haberdashers and ruined boxers was ever gathered to lord it over an innocent and peaceful people […] Obtuse, dense bureaucrats with cockney

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[32] L. Durrell, "Preface" to Ilias Venezis, *Aeolia* (trans. E.D. Scott-Kilvert), p. v. A new translation, by Therese Sellers, including passages omitted in the earlier version, was published in 2020, as *Land of Aeolia* with Durrell's "Preface" appearing as an Endnote, with Angelos Sikelianos' "Prologue" to the second Greek edition.
[33] *Durrell-Miller Letters*, p. 186.
[34] *Spirit of Place*, p. 80.

accents refusing to mix with the natives and then ordering whiskies in the British Club."[35]

In his "Winter Journal", written in Rhodes, Durrell the poet with the painter's eye could see here, too, the *light* (*Fos*) that for many had characterised Greece:

> The Ægean is still waiting for its painter; waiting in the unselfconscious purity of its lights and contours for someone to go really mad over it with a loaded paintbrush. Looking down from the sentinel's tower in the fortress of Castello, watching the swifts totter and fall into the blue gulf, you begin painting it for yourself in words. Cerulean sky with white cirrus; veridian to peacock's tail where the sea bangs upon the edges of the cliff-wall. But to paint Greece one must do more than play with the primary colours; one must convey the soft chalky whiteness of the limestone, the chalk-dust that comes off the columns, the soft pollen-like bloom upon the vases. Then, too, you would have to master the queer putty-mauve and putty-grey tones of the islands — rock that seems to be slowly becoming red-hot. Volcanic notes.[36]

Conscious of his official position, and perhaps foreseeing today's Turkish demands for the rescinding of the international treaties which allocated the islands to Greece, and a return to Turkish ownership, Durrell wrote:

> If one were so silly as to want proof of the essentially Greek nature of the Dodecanese islands one would only have to remark on the direct continuity of peasant legends and beliefs with those obtaining elsewhere; the folk-lore of Rhodes, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Vrontè, is already known territory — though the slender pamphlets in which this model anthropologist has issued the results of his researches are very hard to find.[37] The search is worthwhile, however, for the legends of the peasant to-day often go side by side with what history has taught us to believe as facts.

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[35] Letter to Anne Ridler, 15 June 1946, in *Spirit of Place*, pp. 85-86.

[36] "Winter Journal" was published at that time in *Penguin New Writing* (1947). Parts of this Journal were also incorporated, with changes, into *Reflections on a Marine Venus*. It was reprinted in *Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988* vol. 1, pp. 345-352.

[37] In *Reflections on a Marine Venus* Durrell lists two works in Greek by Anastasiou G Vronti: ΡΟΔΙΑΚΑ [Rodiaka] and ΡΟΔΙΤΙΚΑ ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙΑ [Roditika Tragoudia or "Rhodian Songs"], both of 1939.

This, as in his other writings on Greek peasantry, is redolent of Durrell's willingness to accept folk-tales, folk-beliefs and folk-magic as valid components in Greek life. He wrote in this essay of the Kallikanzaros, "Pan's youngest surviving brother, [who] is the gremlin of the peasants. People who have been lucky enough to meet a Kallikanzaros have described him as a smaller edition of Pan, but with horns, pointed ears, and hooves all complete. He has been seen in almost every part of Greece and it is only right that he should also have devoted a part of his time to Rhodes." Moreover, "Werewolves also appear in Rhodes with distressing frequency. If a woman die in childbirth, says the legend, she becomes a werewolf; and in order to prevent her rising from her grave the village often put a cross of bramble over it. This is usually efficacious."

Then Durrell permits himself – significantly for our purposes – to speculate on the connection between modern and ancient Greece.

> Sprawling in the hot sand under the plane-tree which grows so improbably close to the salt water, I wonder for the thousandth time what is the magic of the ancient world which has exercised so vast an effect on Europe; how is it that these small cities with their dazzling white temples succeeded in casting the nets of their mythology and their grammar across the world? A million scholars have been busy on the problem, and for all their knowledge it has not been solved. Perhaps it lies in the universality of the phenomenal world as it presented itself to the Greek thinkers — the universality of its application in thought, in paint, in poetry. Fire, garlic, water, air — all the elements of life here provided not only the natural theatre of investigation for the philosopher, but also the palette of the painter, and the springboard for the poet.

Durrell also referred to the fact that St. Spyridon, patron saint of Corfu (where his embalmed body is preserved), was also venerated in Rhodes, for a similar ability to prevent plague. Durrell's reference is timely now, with our communal fear of the threat posed by the pandemic of Covid:

> The black pest has obviously exercised the imagination of the peasant to a considerable extent. Many are the theories given to account for its appearance. One of the oddest is the theory that the plague came from the rags which a king once used to clean his bloody sword on some unnamed battlefield. A story for Freudians to whom all folklore is grist for the analytical mill.[38]

[38] Durrell also refers to the osmosis between the dreaming and sleeping worlds in a chapter intended for *Reflections on a Marine Venus* but omitted during the editing

Finally, we cannot ignore Durrell's pronouncement on Greece: "This small country […] never had any fixed geographical borders. It was a state of mind".[39]

Durrell in Egypt

Durrell's time in Egypt was split between his duties as a press officer and his private pursuit of poetry; these years produced the poetry collections *A Private Country* (1943), *Cities, Plains and People* (1945) and *Seeming to Presume* (1948), as well as the "Recitative for radio" "In Europe". Durrell was in the company of many exiles, including George Seferis who, like himself, was both a poet and a diplomat. Durrell and two fellow-poets, Robin Fedden and Bernard Spencer, edited a poetry journal, *Personal Landscape*, which represented "an anthology of exile",[40] with contributors (not exclusively poets) from, among others, Terence Tiller, Diana Gould (later Diana Menuhin), Keith Douglas, Olivia Manning, Seferis and Elie Papadimitriou. I have elsewhere outlined Durrell's friendship with Seferis – a friendship which almost foundered when Durrell took an official position in Cyprus.[41]

It was Durrell's experience of his own, now double, exile from India and Greece, coupled with that of the artists he encountered in Egypt, which confirmed his belief that "the refugee habit" had now become a fact of life in a world deracinated from itself. He had already encountered this idea with Gostan Zarian, whom he dubbed "triple exile" and whom he quoted: "one has to be an exile in order to belong to the world".[42] His most emotional response, perhaps heightened by his friendship with Seferis, who was himself a "refugee" from his birthplace, Smyrna, was "In Europe", with its mantra "We are getting the refugee habit."

In terms of what his work can tell us about Egyptian culture his most notorious work, *The Alexandria Quartet*, is probably the least

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process by Anne Ridler; it is reproduced in *Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988* vol. 1, pp. 353-66.

[39] *The Greek Islands*, p. 273.

[40] The sub-title of the anthology collected principally by Fedden, published in 1945.

[41] See R. Pine, chapters 5 and 6 in *Lawrence Durrell's Woven Web of Guesses*; also "George Seferis" in *Lawrence Durrell's Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988* vol. 1, pp. 371-375.

[42] L. Durrell, "Constant [*sic*] Zarian – Triple Exile" reprinted in *From the Elephant's Back*, pp. 25-31.

informative, although many of the daily features he mentions find their way into the book:

> I was in charge of some 250 press people. They became great friends of mine, and I found myself lying in barbers' shops beside them, or being shaved in my office and them being shaved alongside me. Or invited to their cocktail parties, or to shoot with the Greek press on Mareotis — which I did several times, a most marvellous experience — or to their country houses. My job here gave me a wonderful point of vantage and opened up Alexandria to me. All that in a very, very limited range. For example, you could walk round the town, the actual town which was founded by Alexander, in a matter of ten minutes. Past the Greek Club, and see the Greek bankers smoking away. Past the tavern, and hear the joggle of tavlas and see perhaps a Cavafy of the epoch writing verses and being served little Turkish black coffees.[43]

Durrell's years in Egypt were without doubt the unhappiest of his life. Landed there by accident in 1941, a casualty of the war, his life was, effectively, suspended for the next four years, during which his first marriage collapsed. *Personal Landscape* and its associated relationships with fellow-exile poets was in a sense a negative bonus to this disaffiliation from all that Durrell had hoped that Greece could offer him. Apart from his personal dislike of Egypt – expressed for example in his comment "The sores, the leprosy, the smallpox, syphilis and bilharzia […and] tinsel brothels"[44] – a source of repulsion shared with predecessors like E.M. Forster and contemporaries like Robin Fedden – the "in-between" state of Alexandria in every sense of the term, infiltrated the eventual *Alexandria Quartet* – a hybrid city imposed on Egypt first by its founder, Alexander the Great and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Greeks, Jews, and French *négociants* and, from 1914 until 1952, effectively under British control.

Where some critics have applauded Durrell's "creation" of Alexandria as an imagined place, into which he introduces the idea of hybridity itself, Hala Halim (and several others)[45] have seen this as a

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[43] In Peter Adam's feature on "Spirit of Place: Lawrence Durrell's Egypt", *Listener*, 20 April 1978, reprinted in *Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988* vol. 1, pp. 407-15.

[44] L. Durrell, "Introduction" to *Return to Oasis*, p. xxiii.

[45] In particular, Mahmoud Manzalaoui, "Curate's Egg: An Alexandrian Opinion of Durrell's Quartet" and Edwar al-Kharrat, address to the International Lawrence Durrell Society, Alexandria, 1996 (unpublished – copy in the Durrell Library of Corfu).

deceptive and (in Said's terms) Orientalist view of the city which misrepresents it fundamentally. In her thorough critique of the *Quartet*, Halim refers to Alexandria as "precariously poised between, on the one hand, a quasi-Greece/Europe and, on the other, a quasi-Orient […] If, geographically speaking, Alexandria is not situated in either Europe or the Levant (i.e., the eastern Mediterranean), Durrell's *Quartet* seems to locate the city on the fault line of an ambivalence." She quotes Durrell's character Mountolive (the British ambassador): "The Alexandrians themselves were strangers and exiles to the Egypt which existed below the glittering surface of their dreams […] Alexandria was still Europe – the capital of Asiatic Europe, if such a thing could exist".[46]

Ciara Barrick is also critical of Durrell's characterisation (as compared, in her view, with Stratis Tsirkas' *Drifting Cities*). She sees Durrell emphasising the "liminal position between the East and the West" of Jews and Greeks in *The Alexandria Quartet*, and states clearly:

> The Eastern Mediterranean has long been a liminal space with regard to nationality, hybridity, and culture in part as a result of the polycentric nature of the region (generating commerce, resettlement, and cultural exchange) as well as the various empires that warred to dominate the area since time immemorial.[47]

The liminality of Alexandria (as a hybrid construct with little relation to the country in which it was situated) is also an indication of the city as a conduit between East and West – a factor emphasised in Durrell's *Quartet* and central to his understanding of the Levant. As he emphasised in a 1970 interview:

> Alexandria was the source of our entire culture. All the religions met in a head-on crash there, all the metaphysics; our science was born there: the first measurement of the earth, Euclid. It was the birthplace of our mathematics.[48]

All his life, Durrell insisted that Alexandria had been the conduit for Indian philosophy and other aspects of Greek knowledge and culture.[49]

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[46] H. Halim, *Alexandrian Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 186, 202, and quoting *The Alexandria Quartet*, p. 509.
[47] C. Barrick, "Drifting Diasporas: Competing Narratives of Jewish and Greek Identity in *The Alexandria Quartet* and *Drifting Cities*".
[48] "The First of the New Romantics", originally published in *Shenandoah* and reprinted in Ingersoll (ed.), pp. 107-17.
[49] See also Chapter 15 in this volume, "Early Buddhism and the Greeks".

He also affirmed (and that is an absolutely apposite word) "the religious continuity" palpable in Alexandria:

> Hermes is the chap Jesus took over from, and he from Aesculapius, and so back through Chaldea and Persia to India. A continuous line; so that from an imaginative point of view Alexandria is the hinge of our whole Christian culture, historically bridging Eleusis and Rome.[50]

Durrell returned to Greece many times – especially Corfu where, in the 1970s, he seriously considered returning to live.[51] He revisited Egypt only once, in 1977, with film-maker Peter Adam (with whom he had made "Spirit of Place: Lawrence Durrell's Greece" for the BBC in 1975) to make "Spirit of Place: Lawrence Durrell's Egypt". In the course of the programme, Durrell discusses another aspect of Egypt – its African qualities:

> Here, you smell the desert and you smell the heart of Africa being poured down that funnel, the Nile, like smoke, and arriving in silt in this big delta. As a matter of fact, Egypt begins out at sea. Way outside, in the deep harbour – beyond the harbour, in fact – you realise you're approaching another soil, and whatever the Greeks have done to Hellenise this town, it does smell of desert, and it does have its Khamsins – its desert winds, it gives the air a prattling, lustful sort of quality which, mingled with the sea. is very bracing and rather disorienting. You could easily go mad here.

"It is very strange to come back after such a lapse of time", he said, "and to find the country relatively unchanged, because the emanations of the ground seem to me on the same frequency, with the same vibrations, and the changes are simply superficial." His characteristic search for origins, for rootedness, for stability, is betrayed in his remarks on Egypt, as they were on Greece:

> At Thebes, we are really in the burning glass of Egypt, and I have a feeling that it is here, in this terribly hot sunlight, that the whole business of Egypt started as an entity. […] At any rate, this great civilisation, of which this valley's an extraordinary testimonial, clearly spread all over the Middle East, and subjugated every tribe and every country around it, even Crete, a notoriously tough customer. […] The general configuration of this enormous river [the Nile] is rather like a lotus, in which the

[50] "The Kneller Tape", in Harry T. Moore (ed.), *The World of Lawrence Durrell*, p. 168.
[51] Letters to Sourraya Frick, Durrell Library of Corfu.

> flower is floating in the delta, in the Mediterranean, and the root is somewhere up here. And the root, of course, is darkest Africa. You can already see on the faces the extraordinary change that's come about: a new dignity, Certainly, in the actual physical make-up, Africa is talking.[52]

At the same period, Durrell paid homage to E.M. Forster, whose *Alexandria: a History and a Guide* (1922) had been useful to him both during his time in Egypt and when writing *The Alexandria Quartet.* Durrell's homage took the form of an "Introduction" to a 1982 reprint of Forster's work.

In 1915 Forster had visited Alexandia where he met C.P. Cavafy. Cavafy is mentioned only once in the original edition of Forster's book, in a translation of one of his best-known poems, "The God Abandons Antony", with the brief footnote: "the poet is eminent among the contemporary writers of Greece" and alluding to his residence in Alexandria. In an introduction to a new edition (1961), Forster specifically states that "one of the joys of those years was my friendship with the great Greek poet who so poignantly conveys the civilization of his chosen city." Forster also acknowledged that Durrell had "widely eulogized" Cavafy (he was referring to *The Alexandria Quartet* where Durrell casts Cavafy as a central absence as "the old poet of the city").[53]

In his own Introduction to Forster's book, conscious that an Arab culture had displaced most traces of the previous cosmopolitan character of the city, Durrell recalls:

> I arrived in 1941, twenty-three years after this book was written and eight years after the death of the great poet-friend of Forster, Constantine Cavafy. Magically, nothing had changed that I could discern. For two years I was able to walk about in the pages of this guide-book, using it as piously as it deserves to be used, and borrowing many of its gleams of wisdom to swell the notes for the book I myself hoped one day to write. […] It is a dispiriting exercise to bring the story up to 1977, the date of my last visit to the city, for much of what was left has vanished with the foreign population of business folk – five languages was considered quite normal for an Alexandrian *commercanti.* They have vanished and the harbour is a mere cemetery – no life, no movement animates it. The long flirtation of Nasser with Communism had produced the inevitable deadening effect. […] All foreign posters and advertisements have vanished, everything is in Arabic; in our time film posters were billed in

[52] The text of Adam's report is printed in *Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988* vol. 1, pp. 407-17.
[53] E.M. Forster, *Alexandria: A History and a Guide* (1986 edition), pp. 104, xxiii.

> several languages with Arabic subtitles, so to speak. Now a leaden uniformity rules. […] I reflected on exile in general and my own in particular. When I came here there was no reason to suppose that the war would ever end, that I should ever leave Egypt. It was lucky that I was rootless by background and inheritance – a colonial. [...] So once again Alexandria has sunk into oblivion. […] Perhaps some happy accident will in the course of time once more renew the secret spring and make it evocative for a new generation of poets. Apollonius, Theocritos, Cavafy inspire one to believe in such a future despite the evidence of today.

Yugoslavia

Durrell took up duty in Belgrade in May 1949. In November 1949 he and a colleague, John Sydney Gibbs, undertook a duty trip by jeep from Belgrade southwards to the border of Macedonia (at that time a constituent republic of the Yugoslav Federation) and across the border into Greece, to assess the general conditions of the people and the political climate. In this official report Durrell quoted at length from Gibbs' own record of his meetings, which I have abridged; the following is a selection of Durrell's observations, with interpolations by Gibbs.[54]

> The Information Officers Belgrade and Zagreb have just completed a trip to Salonika by road, covering some 635 miles by jeep and also 300 by rail. In Yugoslavia they covered 515 miles of road. A record of their impressions may give a picture of prevailing conditions in Southern Yugoslavia today.

"The keynotes", Durrell reported, "were poverty and apathy".

> [Gibbs reports on general conversation with peasant families encountered en route, who spoke of the adverse effect of the post-war political change, on their material conditions, the introduction of co-operatives (which were not conducive to the work ethic) and the labour-gangs to which those offering help to dissidents were sent. "None had any room for his present lot and saw no hope in the future." Britain was perceived as having contributed to this through its wartime support for the partisans who now controlled the government.]
>
> Typical of the mixture of peoples here, he was a Serb from Sur Planina, a mountainous district a few miles from where we were and where, he told

[54] The report (UK National Archives, F[oreign] O[ffice] 371/78682/R11215) was first published in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 August 2009, and reprinted in *Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988*, vol. 1, pp. 392-97.

> us, there is a Serb settlement. (The last town we had left a few miles back – Urceovac – belongs to the Kosovo Albanian group of towns, of which Pristina is the centre.)
>
> [Gibbs: The general standard of living in Macedonia was lower than that in Serbia or Croatia, with poor infrastructure and communications: "Macedonians cannot be expected to show enthusiasm for any regime which does not produce tangible advantages." Lack of recognition of the Macedonian language was a continuing problem.][55]
>
> The contrast between Yugoslavia and Greece was even more striking when the party asked for shelter in the house of a Greek peasant a few miles inside the Greek border. The father, mother and children were, by comparison, most prosperous; their house was furnished with coloured rugs and hideous oleographs. The children were decently clad. The father had both wine and ouzo to offer the visitors from a small barrel in his cellar. He wanted for nothing really, he informed the party. After having been completely dispossessed, the British and Americans had reinstated him and made him once more as prosperous and happy as before the war. His land was under cultivation. It was true that times were still hard, and prices high but both bread and olive oil were falling in price – and like all Greeks he calculated the index of living upon these two commodities. There was now, he said, "enough olive oil for the saints" (and indeed a true index of relative prosperity in Greece is to find that wayside shrines have some olive oil in the lamps before the ikons). Gibbs was amazed at the contrast in living conditions between the two countries and observed that Tito's refusal to let Yugoslavia join the KRP bloc constituted the worst action against the Yugoslav people as a whole. More than this, he was staggered by the buoyant and optimistic manner in which all the Greeks he met viewed the future.
>
> Their freedom of speech and thought was something completely new. The whole party suddenly felt as if it had emerged from some gloomy valley of fear and despair into sunlight. There was of course plenty of gambling everywhere; but against the speechless, dependent apathy of the Yugoslavs, one could observe gaiety, good spirits, unfettered freedom of criticism and a frantic commercial activity.

Durrell's views on communism – and life under communism – were emphatically Churchillian. His letters from Belgrade are full of his

[55] To my personal knowledge, a Canadian of Macedonian descent, in attempting to research his father's origins in his native village, near the Greek-Macedonian border, discovered that not only had the parish registers relating to persons of Macedonian origin been deleted, but their graves in the local cemetery had been destroyed. See also Kapka Kassabova, *Elixir: In the Valley at the End of Time*.

distaste for the drabness which he attributed to the political system. He defined a communist as someone "whose politics are based upon a pipe-dream which in turn is based upon a social grudge".[56] His immediate impression of Yugoslavia was: "As for Communism […] a short visit here is enough to make one decide that Capitalism is worth fighting for." This posting was like "a 3-year sentence in Pentonville [prison]".[57] '[I] don't know why it is that we dislike most of the countries we get sent to – never happy unless we are in Greece."[58] Yugoslavia, according to Durrell, was "this inert and ghastly police state […] this machine state […] Sabbatarian gloom". "This country has withered me with its Utopian present […] and even more the Utopian future it promises for all of us".[59] Belgrade is "this filthy dank capital with its cloddish inhabitants". By contrast, Zagreb (capital of Croatia) is "a lovely little Austrian [*sic*] university town" and Sarajevo (capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina) struck him as "a Turkish town – pure 1795 […] Mosques, minarets, fezes – holding the gorgeous East in fee […] One was back in Jannina or some town in Epirus again".[60]

Durrell's repulsion was not merely cultural or aesthetic: he sensed the unease of the political compromise which had created Yugoslavia (as an amalgam of Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Montenegro in 1918 – first as a kingdom and, from 1943, as a republic) and predicted the collapse which would come from 1990 onwards. "I don't see how we are going to get through the next few years without a war" he told Anne Ridler in 1952.[61]

Cyprus

Durrell's time in Cyprus, as the "servant of two masters" (on one side his employers, whose policy dictated opposition to every mention of *enosis*, and on the other his philhellenism, in which privately he sided with both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots) in fact made him a triple exile: he was now yearning for India, yearning for Greece itself, and "beyond the pale" (as his friend Maurice Cardiff put it), dividing him from his Greek friends, of whom Seferis was the most scathing.[62]

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[56] "Constant [*sic*] Zarian – Triple Exile", in *From The Elephant's Back*, p. 228.
[57] Letters to Theodore Stephanides, 1949-51, in *Spirit of Place*, pp. 100-107.
[58] Letter to Anne Ridler, Winter 1950-51, *Spirit of Place*, p. 108.
[59] Letters to Theodore Stephanides and Anne Ridler, *Spirit of Place*, pp. 100-108.
[60] Letter to Anne Ridler, 1949, in *Spirit of Place*, p. 103.
[61] Letter to Anne Ridler, May 1952, *Spirit of Place*, p. 110.
[62] M. Cardiff, *Friends Abroad*, p. 20. Cardiff, who was director of the British Council in Cyprus, in fact acknowledged that it was he who had first facilitated

In writing *Bitter Lemons* Durrell betrays his anxieties in his Preface: "This is not a political book". Yet he knew, undoubtedly, that like all his writings it would be construed as having a "political" dimension, since in the next paragraph he states: "I can claim to have seen the unfolding of the Cyprus tragedy both from the village tavern and from Government House."[63] Nevertheless, his insistence that he hoped to have created a "monument […] to the Cypriot peasantry and the island landscape" is not unfair. That he calls the episode a "tragedy" indicates where his sympathies lay: while, in order to finance his writing, he was a mouthpiece of British policy, in private he noted in his diary on 2 June 1956:

> Achievements of H[er] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] this year:
> 1) Total wreck of NATO
> 2) Turko-Greek discord
> 3) Community strife in Cyprus
> 4) 22,000 troops disguised as police
> 5) State Dept anxiety
> 6) Suspension of Habeous [*sic*] Corpus
> 7) Concentration Camps
> 8) Completely muzzled press
> 9) Right & left wing in prison
> 10) No hope of constitutional issue.
> The moral effect of terrorism is now complete. The Cypriots have been turned into Greeks. Their hatred of us is now complete. It is idle of H to talk about defeating 'the terrorists'. He has successfully made all the Cypriots terrorists [...] We have lost something more than an imaginary 'bastion of the free world'. We have inflicted a deep psychic shock on the Greeks which will never heal. They are the only nation left which shared the English's blind faith in 'an English mystique'. The value to us of this myth was incalculable. It has gone. [64]

Durrell's teaching post in Nicosia and, subsequently, suggested the appointment of Durrell to the position of Director of Information Services (ibid., pp. 25, 28).

[63] L. Durrell, *Bitter Lemons*, p. 11.

[64] Durrell Archive, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. "H" was Field-Marshal Sir John Harding, who replaced the civilian Governor of Cyprus in 1955, precipitating increased violence on the part of *enotists*. Durrell's disillusion with British foreign policy, no doubt motivated by his natural sympathies with the peoples whom that policy, in his opinion, adversely affected, was expressed at almost the same time in relation to the Middle East as a whole, when he put into the mouth of his character Pursewarden (like himself, a British diplomat and novelist): "It is neither coherent nor even a policy – at any rate a policy capable of withstanding the pressures which are being built up here [Egypt]": *The Alexandria Quartet*, p. 473.

Later still, but prior to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, he would insist on the ability of Greek Christians and Turkish Moslems to live peaceably side by side if not exactly in each other's company – a point insisted upon much later by Andreas Koumi in his novel *The Cypriot*.

At the outset of his appointment, Durrell wrote three articles on Cyprus for *The Economist*. The following is a very small selection of his masters' views which nevertheless also reflects Durrell's own philhellenism and in which he does not hold back in speaking of "British inaction" and "British failure to think [the problem] important".

> The Cypriots do not dislike Britain; they merely long for Greece […] Greece offers them a real equality of citizenship. […] Their deep sense of frustration deserves sympathy […] Genuine and imperative as the psychological need for union is, the Cypriot is far from blind to the grave material hardships which would follow it, and fall on a people completely unused to them. The substitution of the drachma for the pound, and of the Greek judicial system for the present relatively honest if leaden-footed one, not to mention the intrusion of commercial rivals from Greece, could have grave effects on business no less than on pleasure. […] The standard of living is fantastically high compared with that of Greece; and while it is true that the apparent health of the economy of the island is really artificial – that is, not based upon its real resources — nevertheless trade is booming and money pouring in.[65]
>
> Hellenism itself in the Mediterranean […] has been thrown into vivid relief by the riots in Turkey, and Athenian political circles are wondering uncomfortably whether the events of 1922 could not repeat themselves if relations with Turkey deteriorate any further. The riots in Turkey have silhouetted the position of all Greek communities in the Levant. […] Indeed, from the point of view of the Athens Foreign Ministry, nothing less than Hellenism in the Levant is at stake and Greek foreign policy will have to be oriented to counter this extremely grave threat.[66]

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[65] "The Cypriot's Dilemma", 24 July 1954. Regarding the question of whether or not the lives of Cypriots would be materially (as distinct from culturally) improved by *enosis* with Greece, it is noteworthy that George Seferis found the "Hellenism" of Cyprus exhilarating, but noted in his diary: "a world where people speak Greek, a Greek world, but one that doesn't depend on the Greek Government" which point, he believed, "contributes to [a] sense of spaciousness": quoted in R. Beaton, "'A Continent as Big as China': Hellenism in the Life and Work of George Seferis".

[66] "Hellenism in Danger", 25 September 1955. The events in Turkey are also mentioned by Tassos Boulmetis, above, pp. 132-138. Both articles from the *Economist* are reprinted in *Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988*, vol. 1, pp. 376-91.

Privately, Durrell wrote to friends about the dichotomous positions he was attempting to maintain, as a philhellene and as an agent of British policy: "I am grappling with the moribund Information Services of the island, trying to make our case against the united howls of Enotists, British pressmen and fact-finding MPs", he wrote to Freya Stark shortly after his appointment, which also included the editorship of the *Cyprus Review*, for which he solicited contributions from Stark and others, stating "I am planning to give the government a really good Middle Eastern review. It really does need something to project Cyprus and to give some standing to British culture generally".[67]

Setting up his own home – in itself a new experience after the fourteen years following the exit from Corfu – he wrote to Theodore Stephanides: "Cyprus is charming […] it has a very real beauty of its own – it lies in the great soft hush of the Levant", and to T.S. Eliot: "Cyprus is rather a lovely, bare, big bland sexy island – totally unlike Greece with a weird charm of its own".[68]

As a salaried servant of the British administration, Durrell was obliged to promote the argument against *enosis* (the union of Cyprus with the state of Greece), in the face of increasing, and ever more violent, revolt on the part of Greek Cypriots. After Cyprus became an independent state (in 1960), rather than a part of Greece, he was far less guarded in his public expressions of sympathy and empathy with the Cypriot dilemma. In the interim, the publication of his memoir *Bitter Lemons* also brought both acclaim and, in Greece and Cyprus, condemnation – a debate which continues to this day.[69]

Ian MacNiven asks: "How much did Larry himself believe of the official line that he was helping to create?" and quotes *Bitter Lemons* to the effect that "one must deeply sympathise with anyone not wanting to be administered by Greeks" – a reference to the volatility of the Greek state bureaucracy. MacNiven comments that Durrell "loved the Greeks for certain aspects of their character – their courage, generosity, humour,

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[67] Letters to Freya Stark, in *Spirit of Place*, pp. 126-28. For Durrell's editorship of the *Cyprus Review*, see David Roessel, "'Something to Stand the Government in Good Stead': Lawrence Durrell and the Cyprus Review" and Ciara Barrick, "'A Private Individual Without Concern for Policy': Lawrence Durrell and the Times of Cyprus".

[68] Letters in *Spirit of Place*, pp. 119, 125.

[69] See, for example, Costis Montis, *Closed Doors: An Answer to Bitter Lemons by Lawrence Durrell* and Rodis Roufos, *The Age of Bronze*; also Petra Tournay-Theodotou, "The Empire Writes Back: Anti-Colonial Nationalism in Costas Montis' *Closed Doors* and Rodis Roufos' *The Age of Bronze*".

wiliness – but he did not quite believe that they could make a go of running a country." He quotes *Bitter Lemons*: "We should lose by force everything that could be gained by diplomacy" – a view which proved only too accurate.[70]

Writing to his Corfiot friend (and later collaborator) Marie Aspioti, Durrell contrasted the pre-war calm of Corfu compared to the crisis on *enosis*: "The past! How clear in outline life seemed then; since the war it has become so crowded with irrelevancies, alarms and excursions – like this stupid quarrel over Cyprus which has no reason to exist and which is making all Philhellenes and Philangloi so bitter and so sad. I am doing my best to interpret the one to the other – to try and hold the old links of friendship and affection fast."[71]

In 1964, following Cypriot independence, Durrell published a letter in the London *Times* (a rare gesture on his part):

> "Sir – On May 21 the Ionian Islands are celebrating the hundredth anniversary of their independence, but the sad state of Cyprus will inevitably overshadow the festivities. Now that the policy evolved 10 years ago by our Government has proved unworkable, as I foresaw, is it not a good time to try and rethink the whole Cyprus problem from the Nato level? Cyprus longed for union with Greece, but was denied this on strategic grounds. […] For some curious reason the thought of Enosis has produced a strange phobia in both the British and the Turks: is this really necessary? It is impossible to understand what either of us have to fear in the emergence of a Greek Cyprus. As far as civil rights are concerned there are some large Turkish communities living under Greek administration (Rhodes, Thrace), and they have never complained of the loss of civil rights by it […] The Greeks and Turks do get on, contrary to popular belief.[72]

It is significant that Durrell is able to refer to the "unworkable" policy "which I foresaw", while nevertheless admitting the "strategic" needs of Britain.

Later, in 1970, *The Times* published a Special Report on Cyprus, featuring Durrell's "Still Bitterness in the Lemons" (a headline for which

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[70] MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell*, pp. 434, 411.

[71] Lawrence Durrell, letter to Marie Aspioti, sent from Nicosia, Cyprus, to Corfu, 1955. Marie Aspioti was the representative of the British Council in Corfu (for which she was awarded the MBE) until it closed its Corfu branch in 1955; her book, *The Enchanted Island of Corfu* was published in English in 1968, and in 1965 she collaborated with Durrell on an anthology of Edward Lear's drawings of, and letters about, Corfu (*Lear's Corfu*).

[72] *Times*, 22 May 1964.

he would not have been responsible); Durrell's remarks on the co-habitation of Greeks and Turks would be thrown into stark relief four years later by the Turkish invasion of the island and its subsequent partition, a conflict which remains to be resolved.

> Its history is simply its Greek pedigree, the mythical extension of its geographical position in the Levant. Yet there is something a little forlorn about its relative isolation from the Aegean scene – for it floats in the corner of the eastern Mediterranean, pointing a long promontory in the direction of Asia Minor. […] Geography plays a role here. Geologically it is a chunk of the Anatolian mainland, snipped off and set free to float. […] The British share in Cyprus history really dates from the island's annexation in 1914, and, one must suppose, was dictated largely by strategic considerations. A just but not over-imaginative administration limped along thenceforward breasting the gradually developing breakers of the Enosis question with little or no diplomatic help from London – and little enough money. The whole question of Cyprus's future became envenomed by neglect: one misunderstanding led to another: the troubles broke out and the bitter period of insurrection set in. The Greeks and Turks have often shown that they can live together with mutual respect – one thinks at once of Rhodes, in spite of the psychological dispositions which rise, at the roots, from two inherently differing religious attitudes, the Orthodox and the Muslim. But the minute the big powers start their manipulations…
>
> Turkey's opposition to *Enosis* is also in its way based on an irrational sensitiveness to the existence of the island so close to a Turkish frontier. […] Today at least the Greek and the Turkish authorities are able to meet around a table, though little appears to allow one to hope that the political demographical gap has been narrowed in the latest round of talks. The dream idea of *Enosis* will never be completely extinguished. Will the Turkish view change? One doubts it. Yet in both camps there are wise farseeing men involved in these negotiations. One lives in hope that one day they will compose their differences, resolve this perfectly anachronistic, medieval problem.
>
> The strategic importance of Cyprus is no longer a capital factor in an age of airborne troops.[73]

Durrell appears to have made no specific reference to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, nor to Turkey's continuing occupation of the northern part of the island (where his own house, in the village of Bellapaix, was situated).

[73] *Times*, 29 April 1970.

Possibly because he remembered his childhood in India, where Indians and colonials lived in close proximity (however we might regard the ethics of colonisation or the Indian desire for independence) Durrell continued to believe in the compatibility and harmony of different races, religions and cultures and, indeed, in the irrelevance of class distinctions. This manifested itself in a short story, "A Village of Turtle-Doves" which grew into a projected novel, *The Placebo*, which in turn was a first draft of what became *Tunc-Nunquam*, a project which occupied him very profoundly in the mid-1960s.

It is perhaps due to Durrell's state of mind at that time – despair verging on madness – that he originally conceived *The Placebo* as a parable of creativity and humane concern, using architecture as an analogy of constructive thinking. *Tunc-Nunquam*, by contrast – although it also features the "mage" figure of the architect, Caradoc – takes the opposite route in negating hope and honesty and in creating a "character" in the ubiquitous "Firm", with its worldwide tentacles, so that the concept of globalisation which "owned" and exploited creativity is mercilessly personified.

The "Village of Turtle-Doves" derives from the Greek word περιστέρι (*peristéri*) meaning "pigeon" or "dove", while περιστεράκι (*peristeráki*) means a squab or a small pigeon. A περιστερώνα *(peristeróna*) or περιστεριώνας (*peristeriónas*) is a pigeon-loft or dovecote. In deciding (initially) to name the village "Peristerona" and (subsequently) "Peristeri", and, throughout the English version, "Village of Turtle-doves", Durrell would probably have recalled the name Peristerona in Cyprus, where two villages bear that name.[74]

The story, of the building of a new village to accommodate both Greek Christians and Muslims has a very direct bearing on both the time when it was conceived and today, with Greek-Turkish tensions over the status of the Muslim population in north-eastern Greece (Thrace) near the border with Turkey, where Durrell's novel was to be set.

As David Roessel points out in his introduction to *The Placebo*, many of Durrell's ideas about the craft and philosophy of building were derived from the architect Austen Harrison (a friend in Cyprus) and from "New Gourna", a village in Egypt designed by Hassan Fathy (whom Durrell would not in fact meet until his return to Egypt in 1977). New

[74] He may also have had in mind the taverna where, in Corfu in the 1930s, he and his associates (including Theodore Stephanides and Gostan Zarian) held "Ionian Banquets" – its name was Πέρδικα or, The Sign of the Partridge. See "The 'Ionian Banquets'" in T. Stephanides, *Autumn Gleanings: Corfu Memoirs and Poems*, pp. 35–39.

Gourna, like Durrell's Peristeri, was to have both a church and a mosque.

In Durrell's story, "Peristeri" is both a Greek and a Turkish village near the Greek-Turkish border, and this factor gives the Greek government cause for concern. The prime minister and his minister for development worry over how this new project is to be accomplished. The prime minister's anxiety that disturbance at Peristerona might be seen as an attack on a Turkish (or Muslim) minority is very real. In this area, it is in fact unusual to find Greeks and Turks living in proximity in the villages (which tend to be either predominantly Greek or predominantly Turkish), except in larger towns such as Serres (mentioned by the prime minister as a trouble-spot), and Xanthi.[75] A Greek village might be a short distance from a Turkish village, with the two communities maintaining their own identities and boundaries. The challenge to Durrell's architect Caradoc, to build a village which could accommodate both the Orthodox and Muslim communities and faiths, was considerable. Durrell's image of a Turkish village with a significant Greek population is therefore an attempt in his own mind to resolve tensions between the two populations which would have been apparent to him from his experience in Cyprus.[76]

Palestine

Durrell never spent any significant time in Palestine; his novel *Judith* was a serendipitous outcome of the screenplay which he wrote for a film starring Sophia Loren, produced in 1966. Durrell also wrote the book as a novel (serialised in *Woman's Own* in 1966, shortly after the film's release),[77] which gives us a very accurate representation of his views on a crucial phase in Middle East history – the ending of the British Mandate in Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, which remains relevant today in the light of the continuing conflict between Israelis and

[75] Serres, a town and capital of a region of the same name, in the north-east of Greece is in the same area as "Peristerona"; it had been part of the Ottoman empire in Bulgaria until it was annexed by Greece during the Balkan wars (1912-13); during the second world war (when Greece was occupied by German forces) it was temporarily transferred back to Bulgaria. Constantine Karamanlis, Greek prime minister 1955-63 (the years during which *The Placebo* was being drafted), was a native of Serres, which led to significant benefits for the region; Durrell was quite possibly aware of this.

[76] In fact, Durrell's drafts for *The Placebo* include loose pages referring to the Cyprus crisis as he had witnessed it.

[77] The novel was published in its entirety for the first time to mark Durrell's centenary in 2012.

Palestinians. In a similar vein to his insistence that Greeks and Turks could co-habit the same territory, Durrell demonstrates a deep understanding of the ability of Jew and Arab to live together in Palestine (however much he displays his sympathy for Jews and his lack of sympathy for Arabs). His reference (above) to "the big powers start[ing] to manipulate" has a bizarre echo here, since it was Britain's much vaunted "Balfour Declaration" in favour of a Jewish state in Palestine, and the secret agreement with France (the "Sykes-Picot Agreement") relating to the sustenance of Arab interests in the region, which bedevilled any solution to a Jewish homeland.[78]

Durrell's knowledge of the Levant enabled him to create scenes redolent of specific times and places. The main players in this adventure represent positions which had become somewhat institutionalised in the course of the Mandate situation, including Aaron as the speaker of the *leitmotiv* "Israel must get itself born";[79] Lawton the reluctant British soldier, caught, like Durrell himself in Cyprus, between personal feeling and military duty. Durrell was in pole-position to employ this experience in the service of a novel which would incorporate both a love story and the elements of a political thriller.[80]

Specific events such as the United Nations vote in favour of partition (27 November 1947) and the British military and administrative withdrawal from Palestine (14-15 May 1948) provide the pillars on which the personal fortunes of Durrell's characters rest. His "political" background made it possible to include elements in the storyline, such as the unsuccessful blockade with which it opens, the encounter between the childhood friends Aaron (Jewish) and Daud (Arab), and the threat of deportation to Cyprus, all of which are linked thematically and organically to the situation in Palestine at that time.

Durrell himself had witnessed scenes similar to what he describes in chapter 9 of *Judith*, "Operation 'Welcome'", in which ships dodged the British blockade of the Palestine coastline in order to set ashore their illegal human cargo of Jewish immigrants. In 1946 he and his second wife, Eve, had travelled on a Greek naval vessel as part of a rescue of refugees from a sunken ship; as Ian MacNiven relates: "Eight of the refugees had died when the ship had run aground and sunk, but some eight hundred had reached land and were spilled about under the moonlight in a natural amphitheatre. The sight had a weird, ghostly unreality. Larry and Eve

[78] See my introduction to *Judith*.
[79] L. Durrell, *Judith*, p. 133.
[80] He had – at least jokingly – referred to *The Alexandria Quartet* in the same vein, as "such a strange mixture of sex and the secret service!": letter to Theodore Stephanides, *Spirit of Place*, p. 120.

spent the next morning ashore, monitoring radio transmissions and talking to the refugees."[81]

In weaving together these crucial elements in the history of Palestine – the Zionist pursuit of a Jewish homeland, the Arabs' resentment at being displaced from their ancestral lands, and British frustration at the impossibility of implementing the terms of the Mandate – Durrell captured the ironies, injustices and ignominies of that history. The personal stories of the individual characters are set within the brutal period when the inevitability of British withdrawal from Palestine and the equally inevitable Arab-Israeli conflict, not only brought to a head these three strands of history, but predicted and, indeed, precipitated the Middle East crisis which persists to this day. Given that the film of *Judith* (and the serialisation of the novel) appeared in 1966, there is an uncanny prescience of the "Six Day War" that would erupt slightly more than a year later.

Permeating *Judith* is the *leitmotiv* uttered by Aaron ("Israel *must* get itself born") and David Eveh ("Israel must become a reality, a sovereign state"),[82] and, finally, with the UN vote in favour of partition, Major Lawton realises that "Israel had been born".[83] The prophetic dream of Theodor Herzl had come true: "The Jewish State is essential to the world; it will therefore be created […] A State is created by a nation's struggle for existence"[84] – in itself a *leitmotiv* of the emergence of nation-states in this region, from the birth of Greece in 1821-30 onwards.

The question of whether a "nation" can exist unless it is homogenous and monocultural (as discussed in my chapter "Geopolitics and Spirit of Place") arises also in the matter of Israel. One of the problems for assimilation of Jews into the state of Israel was the fact that they came from so many different backgrounds and cultures. Although Herzl had argued that the Jews were a cohesive entity for which the homeland would be provided ("We are a people – one people"),[85] it had equally been argued that "There is no Jewish race now as a homogenous whole" – a Jewish homeland in Palestine would be composed of "a polyglot, many-colored, heterogeneous collection of people of different civilizations and different ordinances and different traditions".[86]

The state of Israel would be a home not to a homogenous people but to disparate peoples from sixty or seventy countries (the number varies

[81] MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell*, p. 333.
[82] *Judith*, p. 158.
[83] Ibid., p. 239.
[84] T. Herzl, *The Jewish State*, pp. 4, 78.
[85] Ibid., p. 8.
[86] Edwin Montagu, in 1915, quoted in Schneer, *Balfour Declaration*, p. 146.

in *Judith*), many of whom had no common language. As the Israeli writer Amos Oz has written, "The Jews from ninety-six different countries of origin… shared a common literary, liturgical and cultural tradition… [but] One need spend only a couple of minutes on any street here to discover that there is no such thing as a Jewish race. Jews are not an ethnic group and the only unifying force is in their heads."[87]

Durrell, alert to the pathos and the macabre humour of the situation, addressed this in *Judith*: "They are just a bunch of Glasgow Jews thriving on the sharp practice they picked up from the Scots. Tell them, moreover, that we honest lowland Jews from Poland, Latvia, Russia and Brooklyn hold them in massive contempt."[88] And the places from which they have come provide the names of their settlements: Brisbane, Brooklyn, Odessa, Calcutta, Warsaw, Glasgow… This reminds us of the same linkage to their origins of the refugees from Asia Minor, who, while settling in Greece, named their new homes as "Nea Smyrna", "Nea Ionia"…

Conclusion

What lessons can we learn from the insights of this poet-diplomat into Greek, Balkan and Levantine cultures? And from his experiences of exile, of the outsider? From Greece he had learned the simplicity of living; in Egypt and Cyprus he had learned the pain of living; in Yugoslavia he had learned that an ideology cannot imprison the mind.

From Durrell's dual roles as writer and public official in Cyprus we know that he deplored the forcing apart of peoples who had successfully lived together for centuries. This he made evident in the context of both the Greek world (in "A Village of Turtle-Doves") and that of Palestine (in *Judith*). He had personal experience not only of his own exile but the pain of others' exile, in particular the loss of Greek homesteads and history (as expressed in his introduction to Venezis' *Aeolia*).

Durrell's deep respect for people – their cultures, their languages, their qualities of life – and for the landscape which sustained them, amounted to a personal quest which had a spiritual quality: he appreciated (more than many among his contemporaries) that the precarious political and aesthetic situation of the 1930s was less of a contemporary problem and more a symptomatic flaw in the human psyche. It was in particular a problem which the extraterritorial writer was better positioned to identify.

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[87] A. Oz, *Israel, Palestine and Peace*, p. 53.
[88] *Judith*, p. 86.

Others with a similar perspective (Frederic Prokosch and Djuna Barnes for example) were also encountering an extra dimension to the problem of "belonging", of being culturally and psychically grounded in a place of meaning, of possible discourse. Very near the end of his life, Durrell said: "My real objective has always been a sort of religious quest, if it could be described as such. I used religion in a purely selfish way, in the hope of curing my complexes." Religion, he added, was not a matter of doctrine or affiliation, but of intellectual latitude – "not in a theological way so much but in the promise, held out to you in yoga, of a factitious repose for the soul, and a feeling of identity with it. In other words, the feeling that you're doing something which is not futile."[89] Europe – or simply "the West" – represented "a civilization based on the principle of the Will", rather than the Taoism he had encountered in early life.[90]

If he despaired of modern civilisation (as particularly demonstrated in *Tunc-Nunquam*) it was only to insist on the *local*, which explains his cherishing of the village or small town with its intimacies, its particular pieties. As he wrote in "Landscape and Character": "Just as one particular vineyard will always give you a special wine with discernible characteristics, so […] Greece will […] express itself through the human being just as it does with its wild flowers […] the unmistakeable signature of the place."[91]

At the same time, on the macro scale, he appreciated that people with different cultures cannot be bound together by mere political expedience: his knowledge of the Balkans – both directly from his years in Yugoslavia, discerning the difference between Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia, for example, and more generally from his observations of other states impinging on Greece itself, such as Albania, Bulgaria and Turkey – taught him that borders are arbitrary and that people and their minds can and will cross borders as they cross the street. We can also, perhaps, learn from Durrell that the fluidity of peoples and ideas across the Balkans and the Levant, from Belgrade to Alexandria, from Corfu to Constantinople, and the cognate nature of their cultures, make something of a mockery of nationalism and the idea of nation-states with resolute borders to their ideologies or their cultures.

As a poet, Durrell concentrated not on the "big" themes but on the particular – a ray of sunlight on a stone, or a stray thought. As a novelist (with diplomatic experience) he painted onto a much larger canvas. Both *Judith* and *The Placebo* (in addition to *The Alexandria*

[89] Conversation with the author.
[90] L. Durrrell, "From a Writer's Journal" (1947).
[91] *Spirit of Place*, p. 156.

Quartet, of course) demonstrate his wider view of the Balkans and the Levant, with Greece at their aesthetic and cultural centre, as entire regions (or even a single region) where history repeated itself and cultures ramified and expanded rather than contracting or straitening.

As a poet who had become more celebrated as a prose-writer, Durrell eschewed the definitions imposed by those who made borders, perhaps because they do not welcome the same qualities which Durrell honoured where he found them: honesty, loyalty and a sense of belonging. In *The Placebo* he wrote: "the aptness of desire had its dangers, and they must be obeyed; yet the prizes were great ones – ideograms of the great love-objects 'man' 'Rose' 'star' – springing from the poor soil of the mind which we abuse.".[92] These "love-objects", joined to the *fos* of Greece and the austere profile it offered to the world, its *perennité* or, in Greek, αιώνιος [*aiónios*] meaning both continuity and inevitability, were his compensations for the loss at the centre of his own life.

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[92] *The Placebo*, p. 181.

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